

Program Music and the Influence of Extra-Musical Narratives on Performance

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Introduction

Art is a fluid and constantly changing form of expression that cannot exist in a vacuum; by nature it forms a conversation, both within a specific medium, between artists over a passage of time, or crossing through the media of art, as one art form seeks to enhance or react to the other. In the case of music, program music serves as the most fitting example of music in conversation with other art media. Program music is composed to illustrate, reflect, or gesture towards some extra-musical element, narrative, or emotion, enhancing the effects of the thing it is expressing through its own musical interpretation. In exploring the nature and variety of program music in this thesis, I have compiled a program that reflects different possibilities of music reflecting something outside itself, with varying degrees of influence of these outside elements on the music itself. The pieces in my performance range from music written in response to a very specific poem to music that has no known program but carries meaning for a performer by the nature of the composer's style; the compositions I have selected for their position between these two extremes do not exist on a linear spectrum, but shed light on the many different ways in which a composer can bring outside influences or his own identity to the music he writes.

Claude Debussy's *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun* serves as the piece that is perhaps most programmatic of my music selection, because it was written in response to Stéphane Mallarmé's poem "The Afternoon of a Faun". The poet and the composer were well acquainted with one another, as Debussy was one of the artists who met in a small group at Mallarmé's home once a week, and it is clear that they respected and found beauty in one another's respective media (Laki, 1). In a slightly self-deprecating manner, Debussy points to the degree of similarity he strove for in his piece: "It is a general impression of the poem, for if music were to

follow it more closely it would run out of breath, like a dray horse competing for a Grand Prize with a thoroughbred” (Austin, 13).

We as listeners and performers assemble an idea of the kinds of connections we should be drawing between the two art forms through this understanding that Debussy hoped only to create an emotional impression of the poem in his music. Critics have therefore focused their discussions on elements such as the elusive nature of both the poem and the piece, stylistically. Edmund Gosse has written of Mallarmé’s poetry: “Language, to Mallarmé, was given to conceal the obvious, to draw the eye, in direct opposition to Wordsworth’s axiom, away from the object” (324). Those studying Debussy’s musical response found similar qualities of elusiveness. “The *Faun*’s rhythm is elusive, like its melody, harmony, and sound...the rhythmic strength is not a matter of accent or emphasis, but rather of continuity. No one is likely to tap his foot with the beats” (Austin, 91-2). An understanding of this elusive quality and its roots is a key insight into understanding how to perform Debussy’s *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun*.

Only slightly less programmatic is the piece *Syrinx*, also by Claude Debussy. Though an incidental piece in Gabriel Mourey’s unfinished play *Psyché* and steeped in the classical *Metamorphoses* by Ovid, the music itself does not relate to any specific poem or text. Its clearly narrative intentions, however, raise interesting questions about the performance traditions of the piece. There are multiple levels of interpretation even in the music’s title. The word ‘syrinx’ is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as both an “ancient musical instrument” and “the organ voice of birds, also called the lower larynx, at or near the junction of the trachea and bronchi” (“Oxford English Dictionary”). These two definitions are important when we look at Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* and see the description of the character Syrinx: “ She had a birdlike voice, her sisters called/ Her Syrinx—twittering and singing the girl/ Was difficult to trap”

(Ovid, 51). The name Syrinx, in Ovid's story, therefore relates to the characteristics of a bird, yet the choice of flute as the instrument of choice is not unimportant. Pan plays the "tender music of bird-calls" on the reeds that are called a syrinx and, tragically, are the disguised Syrinx, whom Pan has unwittingly killed by cutting the reeds in his passionate search for her. In performing Debussy's *Syrinx*, we must therefore call to mind not only the music of birds, but the flute-like instrument that Pan played upon in Ovid's tale.

Problems in the performance tradition of Debussy's *Syrinx* have arisen concerning the issues of the audience that listens to the piece outside of its programmatic context. Austin writes in *Music in the 20th Century: From Debussy through Stravinsky*, "Syrinx...in its original, scenic, dramatic context, charmed most of its comparatively small audience without active listening. But for a concert piece *Syrinx* is too restrained. It gratifies only those who closely follow and to some extent anticipate its melody" (Austin 1966: 22). To imply that the music itself is more difficult to enjoy without the programmatic context puts a great amount of importance on this outside influence for both the performer and the listener, suggesting the idea that music with such direct extra-musical influences, cannot be expressed by the notes alone.

The next piece examined in my study has a different kind of programmatic influence that, though extremely specific, does not rely on any written text in its composition. Olivier Messiaen's *Le Merle Noir* is based on the composer's very carefully taken transcriptions of birdsong. He was confident in the accuracy of his capturing of the birdsong he portrayed in his music, and Paul Griffiths writes in his book *Olivier Messiaen and the Music of Time* that Messiaen "insists that all the songs, 'have been heard in the forest and are perfectly authentic,' even advising the pianist...to make 'a few forest walks in the springtime, especially early in the morning, to familiarize herself with her models'" (168). This is a very precise influence for a

performer to take into account when playing a piece, and perhaps his is an even more extreme programmatic influence than either of Debussy's works, because of the more direct relation of sound to sound when Messiaen converts birdsong to music. Yet the lack of a story in the music makes it a different kind of programmatic piece.

In *Le Merle Noir* specifically, very specific decisions were made by Messiaen in his composition to create the effect of birdsong. Carla Huston Bell points out that the lack of regular measures, and the need to break several parts of the piece into their smallest part, the sixteenth note, in order to play it accurately, are both examples of Messiaen's direct attempt to portray the spontaneity of birdsong. "Reproduction of the patterns of birdsong certainly strengthen his argument that the irregular or ametrical music is most akin to nature" (109-10). Much like the rigid rhythmic notation in Debussy's two works discussed above, the complicated, atypical rhythms in *Le Merle Noir* give the best impression of free, unaffected birdsong when played carefully and exactly as written.

Were the title of Charles T. Griffes' famous flute composition not *Poem for Flute and Orchestra*, it could be argued that his piece carries as little programmatic influence as Bach's E-flat Sonata. Yet in calling his piece a "poem", Griffes is bringing to mind a very specific genre of programmatic music, particularly in light of the heavy influence of poetry in the rest of Griffes' compositions. D. K. Anderson writes in her book *Charles T. Griffes: A Life in Music*, "Griffes' wide-ranging tastes in literature are reflected in the variety of texts he chose for his songs as well as in his choice of poems or prose for his instrumental works" (202). So much of Griffes' music was based on some text he was given or sought out himself, that it is impossible to look at a piece with a title such as *Poem* without thinking about the nature and narrative lyricism of poetry.

And Griffes' *Poem* does feel very much as if it is telling a story. Its very specific and progressing sections, the lyric nature of the melodies in each section, and the buildup in intensity as the music progresses with each section until the last parts are throbbing with emotion, all suggest a narrative quality to the music. Whether there is some text we do not know about, or the music itself is just written to imply one where none exists, it is easy to imagine that a story is being told while performing or listening to Griffes' *Poem for Flute and Orchestra*.

It is a very different kind of influence that comes into play with Ernest Bloch's *Suite Modale* and his other music. Ernest Bloch's music is characterized by his identity as a Jewish composer, mostly because this was a rare quality among his contemporaries. Because it was uncommon for a composer to represent the Jewish identity, Bloch became even better known for it. Robert Strassburg points out how Bloch's identity played a specific role in the style of his music by describing that in his Israel Symphony, "The Jewish character of the work is achieved in large measure by Bloch's use of the rhythmic and melodic motives associated with Yom Kippur shofar calls" (30). Thus Bloch calls upon the music of his faith to obtain his identity in a similar fashion to the way Messiaen calls upon the music of birdsong.

When we consider the *Suite Modale* in the context of this program, it is important to note that it is not considered one of the works that clearly identifies him as a Jewish composer. Strassburg writes: "One can sense the composer's delight in composing it. The work lacks altogether the emotional conflicts and outbursts found in the *Proclamation* and *Symphony in E-flat*" (95). Although it is a more contained piece and does not have as many clear outward signs of Bloch's personal identity in it, some have argued that there is evidence of it in the music. James R.C. Adams makes this claim in his program notes from the Manchester Symphony Orchestra's performance of the piece. "It has a very French quality, and there are only occasional

flashes of Hebraic anguish, which would go unnoticed by a listener not familiar with his earlier music” (1). Adams does not support this claim with any specific analytical evidence of the elements that have come to characterize Bloch’s style as being distinctly Jewish within the *Suite Modale*, and so although Adams’ familiarity with Bloch’s style may allow him to see very subtle indicators of Bloch’s Jewishness in the music, there is also a chance that Adams has read signs of Jewishness into the style of the *Suite Modale* as a result of his knowledge of the composer’s Jewish identity.

Lastly, and perhaps the grounding contrast to these other programmatic works, the *Sonata in E-flat Major, BWV 1031* by J.S. Bach serves as a piece that offers no explicit programmatic influences at all. Yet interestingly, Bach’s style is so widely studied that there is much that a performer or listener can bring to their experience with this piece without ever having heard it before. The debate over whether the piece itself was composed by J.S. Bach or his son, C.P.E. Bach invites us to closely examine the style of the two composers, suggesting that the evidence of the composer lies in the written notes on the page.

Additionally, there is much that the time period in which the *Sonata in E-flat Major, BWV 1031* was composed suggests for the performance of the music. The performance practices of the Baroque era, and furthermore of the tendencies of the piece to move towards the galant style of performance that followed the Baroque era, lends the performer all sorts of indicators of the ways in which the music should be performed. Approaches towards articulation, tone, and ornamentation play important roles in a performance of J.S. Bach’s work that is well informed of its context within the history of music.

In combining these six pieces with varying dependence on programmatic sources, I hope to explore the importance of the outside influences that the composer takes into account, and

how this affects the way we listen and perform their music so many years later. Bach's *E-flat Sonata*, Debussy's *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun*, and Messiaen's *Le Merle Noir* seem to provide the most illustrative examples of the possibilities of the ways in which extra-musical content influence a performer of these works. I therefore hope to investigate these three pieces from my program in further depth in this written thesis. By studying the composer's influences in writing each piece, and then discussing them with professional performers and teachers, I hope to gain an understanding of how and to what degree the outside program of a piece affects the way the music is both heard and performed.

CHAPTER I:
Claude Debussy's *Prelude to "The Afternoon of a Faun"*:
Compositional Contexts and Stéphane Mallarmé's, "The Afternoon of a Faun"

Claude Debussy's *Prelude to "The Afternoon of a Faun"* serves as an ideal subject of study in the exploration of programmatic music because of the extent to which the creative influences surrounding the piece of music form a conversation with one another. Debussy's orchestral music was written in response to Stéphane Mallarmé's poem, "The Afternoon of a Faun". This poem shows very clear signs of having been influenced by the poetry of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, drawing on images of Pan and Syrinx, as well as the elusive appeal of nymphs. Furthermore, Debussy's music went on to inspire many illustrations and paintings, as well as Vaslav Nijinsky's ballet, *Afternoon of a Faun*. The series of artistic responses in music and other art forms that we see here is at the center of this study of programmatic music, and serves as a powerful example of the way in which art forms may interact with one another.

This kind of relation between the arts is something that both Debussy and Mallarmé supported and discussed, and it is important to know in our study of the two works that their creators knew one another and respected each other's work. In the *Norton Critical Score* of Debussy's piece, William W. Austin quotes Mallarmé's reaction to his first listening of the music: "After having listened he was silent for a long time, then he said to me: 'I was not expecting anything of this kind! The music prolongs the emotion of my poem, and sets its scene more vividly than color' " (13). Debussy was similarly supportive of Mallarmé, and is reported to have said to Henri Gauthier-Villars that his musical response to Mallarmé's poem "is a general impression of the poem, for if music were to follow more closely it would run out of breath, like a dray horse competing for the Grand Prize with a thoroughbred" (Austin, 13).

Although this may be counted as a somewhat dramatic show of humility, the composer's respect for Mallarmé is valuable nonetheless.

Mallarmé also makes an important statement about the relation of literature to music that will bear a great deal of weight in the comparison between his work and that of Debussy. In his lecture entitled *Music and Literature*, given at Oxford and Cambridge, he said: "Music and Literature constitute a moving facet—now looming toward obscurity, now glittering unconquerably—of that single, true phenomenon which I have called Idea" (Austin, 115). The inter-medium artistic relationship that existed between Mallarmé and Debussy is not surprising; as both strive, in their respective arts, to express their ideas in a way that is indirectly evocative and yet striking, they may find that elusive emotion that is missing from their own medium in the works of another's art form.

Looking at the ideas expressed in both the poem and the prelude, there are ways in which we can compare the two very different art forms. One such way is by observing how both employ the theme of duality in their work. In Mallarmé's "The Afternoon of a Faun", pairs of images and ideas appear throughout the poem either enjoined or in opposition to one another. Primarily there is the faun's main dilemma, his inability to sort out his dreams from reality. This forms a major part of the substance of his debate for much of the poem, particularly in the beginning. He comes to a decision sometimes, with declarations like: "Proving, alas! That what I'd claimed for trophy, by myself, / Was only my imagination's lack of roses" (Mallarmé ll. 6-7, Austin, 23). This sets his "trophy", being his memories of his time with two nymphs, against a "lack of roses", the fact that the memory is only a dream. Even within his wavering indecision between these two possibilities, the faun speaks in a manner that expresses further duality. When he tries to determine whether it was two nymphs or just two swans that he saw, he sets those two

images at odds with one another. Yet the faun will continue to search for an answer to his question as new evidence arises and new thoughts come into his head, and the debate between dream and reality continues with the poem.

Duality also appears in the poem in that the faun's vision is of two nymphs, and they two are described as being foils of one another. One is described, "that shy girl's blue eyes, / Cool as a weeping spring", while the other nymph is described as, "all sighs / ...this enervating swoon / Of heat, which stifles all fresh dawn's resistance" (Mallarmé, ll. 10-14, Austin, 23). Here the nymphs are set apart from each other as opposites in many ways. The first is cool as a spring, while the second is a swoon of heat. We are also given very different ideas of them through the actions in their description; the first being the more inward, quieter act of weeping and the second the dramatic, more public act of swooning. The first nymph appears passive in every description and is even called "all sighs", while the second is so much a foil to the first's passivity that she is described as one that "stifles all fresh dawn's resistance". Thus Mallarmé's doubling, even in small details, is not just the inclusion of pairs in his writing, but of pairs that are described as opposites to one another, emphasizing this idea of his indecision.

The presence of two physical manifestations of the faun's desire is answered with further duality by the fact that a faun is, by nature, two physical species combined into one; half man, half goat. The fact that his body is divided between human and animal explains the struggle he faces between dual and opposing natures; that animal, sexual vulgarity and the more pure, elevated love that can be expressed by man through art. The poem is filled with contrasting images, some entirely of physical desire, such as his discovery of "The bite of some proud tooth," and the evidence of his desire in his "cheek's hot agitation" (Mallarmé, ll. 40, 43, Austin, 25). Yet other observations made by the faun are of a more idealized, beautiful desire.

Mallarmé's faun expresses his concern for his lustful thoughts when he says, "that we might, no matter how high love / May be transposed, distill from vulgar thought of shoulder / Or thigh, which I pursue with leering scrutiny, / A single line of sound, aloof, disinterested" (Mallarmé, ll. 47-50, Austin, 25). That he voices his very physical temptations, the more animal part of his nature, with such stunningly musical description reveals the human and the artist in the faun that can overpower physical desire.

This element of duality is a way in which Mallarmé's poem and Debussy's music may be compared, because Debussy also uses duality in his composing of the *Prelude to "The Afternoon of a Faun"*. When we look at the opening and most memorable phrase of the piece, the very first measure consists of a falling and then rising chromatic line that is not entirely symmetrical in notes or in rhythm. In the very first measure, Debussy sets these two ideas against one another and establishes the opposing falling and rising lines he writes as a central theme to the music. Beyond that, the complete phrase in itself consists of two sets of these rising and falling ideas, which are symmetrical except for a short tag of a phrase that comes at the end. We see more duality in the famous glissando in the harp line, which rises chromatically and then falls. The opening flute line, an unbroken four-measure phrase, serves as the first theme of the piece, and it is played with some slight elaboration in the accompaniment a second time. The next theme of the music takes place in the oboe section at measure 17, with the same falling and then rising shape, though it is different this time. In many parts of the piece there seems to be a dialogue between the flutes and the clarinet, adding strength to the idea of duality in the piece.

To move this idea further, it seems that in both the poetry and the music, the idea of duality is set at odds with the occasional trend of groupings of three. In Mallarmé's poem this idea exists in that though the faun seeks two nymphs, what he is seeking is to recreate either his

dream or his memory of when he was with them, and they were a group of three. There are some hints of groupings of three in Debussy's music: one particular moment that stands out as an example of the combination of themes of twos and threes is the introduction of a very mixed-meter melody at measure 63. The flute line, with a few other woodwinds, plays a series of triplets, phrased and articulated in pairs, while the emphasis of the other parts, particularly in the strings, is in the traditional four-four counting, in divisions of two. This moment in which twos and threes are physically layered upon one another creates a kind of tension that adds to the emotional escalation of the piece.

This idea of the mixing of the themes of twos and threes in Mallarmé's poem and Debussy's music is also evident in the very general way in which we can divide both of their structures. It is difficult to find the exact moments in which both works move into new sections, and this difficulty is intentional; both artists strived in their work to achieve a kind of obscurity in the form their art takes on. Yet even if it is difficult to point out the transitions, both works follow a clear progression that can be considered a beginning, a middle, and an end. For "The Afternoon of a Faun", this progression is from the physical states of sleeping, to waking, and then back to sleeping again. It is fitting, therefore, that Mallarmé's progression through the three sections is so smooth it is almost imperceptible; the smoothness mirrors the gradual slippage from consciousness that takes place when one falls asleep, or the gradual process of coming to when one wakes. Though there are only two actual elements to that overall process, and the faun is either in a sleeping state or he is awake, his return to sleep at the end of the poem is different from the departure from it at the beginning, because of the path that the faun has traveled over the course of the poem. Thus we must consider them as separate states, and the journey he takes exists in three parts.

Similarly, the form of Debussy's *Prelude to "The Afternoon of a Faun"*, which follows the overall arc of the poem it responds to, can be considered an A B A' form. Just as the faun's return to drowsiness at the close of the poetry is different from his waking, when the music returns to the initial theme it is not entirely the same; there are some very clear differences in the A' section that prove that it is not a strictly definable recapitulation. One such moment is in that main rising and falling theme. When it is repeated at the close of the piece in measure 100, the lowest note is missing, and the phrase falls on a g-sharp instead of the usual g-natural. Similarly, in measure 103, the phrase ends on the second-to-last note of the original phrase, a c-natural instead of a c-sharp, and hangs on that unexpected note. These changes shrink the interval expressed by the original phrase, affecting the overall emotional effects of the line, and suggesting (but never strictly following) the key of E-flat major in the section, where the opening was more ambiguous in regards to key, gesturing towards c-sharp major, but obscured by the existence of that g-natural which is absent from the closing. A switch from the more tense obscurity of key to this kind of settled major key is one example that marks the A' section as its own, new and third section. Thus we see, in both works, a tension between pairings of two and groups of three that creates another point of comparison between poetry and music that transcends the traditional comparative barriers of the medium.

The slippage from sleep to waking and back again that exists in the poem is expressed quite naturally in the music. The similar, and yet not identical, nature of the opening and closing sections of the piece link them by association to sleepiness; the prevalence of that opening theme in the closing recalls the beginning, even if the starting notes and the rhythm of the phrase has changed. We also get a sense through the differences between the two sections that the first is a gradual building of consciousness and energy, while the closing section is a dissipation of these

things. The opening repeats the same theme in the flute line twice, but the second time it appears, the line is accompanied by strings, inviting the flutist to increase the energy of her performance. Likewise the phrase is gradually elaborated upon, and the music moves away from that theme as it transitions into the more energetic middle section.

This middle section is markedly different from the sections that come before and after by the absence of the main theme. It mirrors the passion of the middle of Mallarmé's poem, as the faun recounts his memory of the nymphs and becomes impassioned by his desire for them. In place of the main theme, the music reaches a newer, more passionate theme at measure 55; this is when we have clearly entered the period of the piece where the music seems to be the most awake. The phrase at measure 55 is a descending line that, in the trio arrangement by Michael Webster, is played by flute and clarinet together. It is also in this middle section that the complex mixing of those rhythmic themes of twos and threes occurs, starting at measure 63, creating a very effective buildup of emotion, and the phrase found at 55 is one of the layers of this complicated section. Mirroring the overall movements of Mallarmé's poem, the music in the middle section is therefore notable for a sense of desperate emotion, in this new theme, and a complicated layering of rhythms that gestures at both the faun's confusion and his much more alert, awake state. This is quite different from the opening and closing sections, which involve movements to and from sleep, and these sections are associated with sleepiness because of the absence of this desperate emotion.

Yet when the return to the state of sleep that is illustrated at the close of the piece occurs, it is not without echoes of the energy and emotion that came before. The initial phrase that was the theme of the beginning of the piece it triggers our sense that we are returning to that restful starting point; but then we are struck with the sudden burst of energy in the descending line of

staccato sextuplets. This moment of sudden wakefulness seems authentic to the process of sleep, calling to mind those moments when a sudden sound, or even your own body's jerk, awakes you briefly just before you fall back to sleep. These echoes of wakefulness soften, dissipate, and eventually disappear from the close of the piece as we get the sense of slipping out of consciousness when the music dies out.

The patient subtlety involved in portraying a sense of movement to and from sleep without directly naming this as a goal, is an artistic achievement both artists strove for. Mallarmé, who had worked with other composers before on this same kind of conversation between poetry and music, may have also taken so well to Debussy's musical response to his poem because of a powerful similarity in their artistic styles. It is not easy to define the structures of either Mallarmé's poem or Debussy's music, just as it is not easy to paraphrase either work or pick out lines or phrases that serve as a definition or a thesis for either of them. This is because, in the creation of both, the artists strove to create an elusive nature in their work. Arthur B. Wenk says of Mallarmé in *Claude Debussy and the Poets*, "Mallarmé disturbs the normal word order or the normal meaning of words, through the use of etymological or metaphorical senses; he collapses constructions in a way to make a single word or formula have several kinds of reference simultaneously" (169). This is not coincidental, but is the intentional goal of Mallarmé's labors. The poet does not express any of the actions of the faun in his poem directly, suggesting that it is not what physically happens over the course of the poem that is important. He very carefully constructs elusive lines in his poetry, so that we cannot see through them to the intentions or creative processes of the poet; it is through painstaking gestures in the writing of his poems that Mallarmé keeps us from seeing his own hand moving the pen. In his article in *The Symbolist Movement in Literature*, Arthur Symons calls us to "Remember his principle: that to

name is to destroy, to suggest is to create” (326). It was Mallarmé’s vision as a poet, therefore, to express himself indirectly, and it creates an aura around his poem “The Afternoon of a Faun” that is beautiful because of its elusive nature.

Debussy’s style in *Prelude to “The Afternoon of a Faun”* fits so well with Mallarmé’s because it is elusive in a musical sense. Coming after a time period in music where themes are traditionally established and then elaborated upon, and in which sections of music can be clearly defined as exposition, development, and recapitulation, Debussy’s music, though based in those ideas, shows us a new kind of composition in the way he obscures these definitions and blurs the lines between such divisions. William W. Austin comments on this idea in his essay “Toward an Analytical Appreciation” in his *Norton Critical Score*. “Every part of this music clings to every other part so firmly, so naturally, that it is hard to identify parts when we want to talk about them. No part out of context makes sense” (71). This idea expresses the fluidity of Debussy’s phrases in the piece, as well as the cohesive but inextricable nature of the overall structure; Austin also points out the futility in picking out three distinct sections of the piece, because it flows so evenly from one to the next.

Debussy also achieves this elusive idea on a harmonic level by obscuring the tonic and the key. Austin points out in his analysis that the high and low notes, C# and G, in the opening phrase of the piece, give no feelings of the tonic, or of any given chord. He writes: “Debussy’s notes are in precise relations to each other, ambiguous relations that suggest more than they make clear or emphatic” (81). He is writing in a way that employs the entire chromatic scale, rather than following the traditional limits of a strict key signature. This ambiguity is achieved in the rhythms Debussy writes as well. Moments discussed above, such as triplets phrased in two-note pairs over a clearly duple meter, along with Debussy’s rhythmically complicated opening

line, are marked with rhythms that are written very intentionally and with great precision, to create the illusion of a free-flowing rhythm. Austin writes that “the rhythmic strength is not a matter of accent or emphasis, but rather of continuity. No one is likely to tap his foot with the beats” (91-92). Just as Mallarmé carefully wrote his elusive lines of poetry to disguise his design, Debussy’s rhythms, on paper, seem quite complex but are in reality capturing a very natural-sounding musical line that seems spontaneous and free to the listener.

The comparison of these two works is fascinating not just because of the ways in which they relate to one another, in the obvious influences of the poem’s emotion and content as a programmatic influence to Debussy’s musical response to the poem, but also in the fact that there are so many ways that the two different mediums can be related to one another on stylistic and structural levels. In reference to the carefully structured but free-sounding composition of Debussy, Austin writes in his *Norton Critical Edition* that “the best performers respect the measure as well as the tempo marks, and use them to create an effect of true spontaneous freedom, whereas arbitrary free interpretations, paradoxically, sound contrived” (94). This is where the performer joins the artistic dialogue, the third component thrown into the pairing; the poet puts his effort into using exact work with language to create an elusive poem, which the composer then seeks to reflect in music that is carefully organized to seem natural. The performer’s role, therefore, is to express this precise rhythm with a style of performance that is easy, languid, and natural. It is the performer’s role to act as if the entire work of music came from her flute on a whim; but the performance must also carry the meaning and weight of the many art forms that have inspired and influenced it. It is this idea of the performer’s role in relation to the composer and the writer of the programmatic inspiration that I hope to explore next, in a conversation with a performer and teacher of French flute repertoire.

CHAPTER II

A Discussion with Lynnette Benner-Savage: Program Music and Performance Mentality

The creation of music inherently involves communication between the composer and the performer; the composer, who hears his creation and notates it for another to pick up, counts on the performer to either follow his symbolic instructions precisely, or to add his or her own interpretation to his notes, depending on the composer's sentiment. This conversation is all the more intriguing the further removed the performer is from the composer. Generations later, when performers come to works such as those of Debussy and read his music, every new performance of the music will be a reaction, a new voice in the conversation, and an element of the work's performance practice. When you add a programmatic element to this mixture, as with Debussy's *Prelude to "The Afternoon of a Faun"*, the conversation opens up even further, and spans various art forms. With so much to accurately represent, the performer is left to decide, in her stylistic approach to her performance, how she can add her own emotions and identity as a performer into her representation of the music.

In order to develop a more comprehensive study of the way in which outside, programmatic influences affect how we approach the music in performance, I met with Lynnette Benner-Savage, a flute performer and teacher whose emphasis in both areas is in French repertoire. I assembled a series of questions for our discussion, and Benner-Savage's responses pose some interesting ideas about the roles and freedoms of the performer in relation to the music, the importance of the extra-musical images inherent in performing program music to the way we perform, and the way these images manifest themselves in physical changes in the way a performer plays the flute¹. Benner-Savage is very conscious in her own performance of the extra-

¹ See 'Appendix A' for the fully transcribed interview with Lynnette Benner-Savage.

musical emotions she is expressing in the music she performs, as well as the ways in which her own performance style can come out even in the most carefully notated music.

We began the interview by discussing the programmatic influences of Debussy's *Prelude to "The Afternoon of a Faun"*. Benner-Savage confessed that she did not know, when she first learned the piece, that it was written in response to Stéphane Mallarmé's "The Afternoon of a Faun"; she is not alone in this misconception. Like many performers, when she first learned the piece she thought that "faun" was the French spelling for "fawn", and that the music was about a young deer. Yet it is interesting that this misconception made it difficult for Benner-Savage to come to terms with the relationship between the idea of this "fawn" and the imagery created by the music. "Because it didn't quite fit the music," she said, "I mean it was pretty, like a baby fawn is, but it wasn't the right kind of playful, it wasn't the right way of musically describing an animal" (Benner-Savage).

Her point here is a fascinating one, and implies that there is something stylistically ingrained in the notes which projects the kind of mystical image of the faun as a magical creature; its compositional style just didn't settle with her performance when she tried to represent a baby deer with the notes. Benner-Savage remarked that when she realized that the music represented a faun, she felt the notes and the extra-musical content they were representing suddenly clicked; the sensual, chromatic nature of Debussy's main theme of the prelude is a fitting representation of the sexual nature and impulses of the mythical faun.

Once the programmatic elements are established, the question becomes how much of this extra-musical narrative the performer is responsible for getting across in her performance. When asked about what she tries to represent in her performance of the *Prelude to "The Afternoon of the Faun"*, Benner-Savage remarked: "I think more along the lines of what the tone of the dream

is. Because it doesn't really let you know...if any of it is actually happening. So I sort of have more of a general, sort of sexy tone. And I don't think of it specifically, I think of the general journey" (Benner-Savage). This approach to performing the music seems to be a very effective one, particularly because it mirrors Debussy's aims in representing Stéphane Mallarmé's poem; one of the reasons Mallarmé was so pleased with Debussy's music was because it did not attempt to follow the poem line by line. Thus a general, languid tone, with perhaps some movement away from and then back towards a state of sleeping, seems an appropriate approach for the performer preparing the music.

Benner-Savage's ideal approach to performance is to capture the feeling of the music, recognizing but not getting caught up in its analysis. In our discussion she emphasized the importance of thinking, and trying out different stylistic and expressive manners of performance. But she argues that when it comes down to the actual performance, she feels that the most natural way to play with the proper emotions is to relax the mind and stop thinking through the details of the performance.

When I'm practicing I'm thinking through each note, I'm thinking through the phrase, I'm thinking about dynamics and the different nuances, and I'll play it a bunch of different ways, and I might like a few of them. So then when it comes to the performance I wing it, and whichever one feels best at the moment, or whichever one comes out, I'll go with. But I do think through it when I'm learning (Benner-Savage).

Though the execution of what Benner-Savage is suggesting seems simple enough, the idea is a complex way of approaching the performance. If preparation is important to a proper expression of the music, it implies that the performer is thinking about her preparation while she is playing; yet Benner-Savage's emphasis on not thinking her way through her performance implies that she is forcing these thoughts down to a sub-conscious level, where the practice and preparation is

helping her perform, but her mind is free to “wing it” and play instinctually with the style of expression that strikes her in the moment.

This topic of the reliance on impulse in expression moved our conversation to the ideas surrounding the freedom that the performer has to add her own input to the music. Benner-Savage described the music of Debussy and of French Romantic music as a whole as being more expressively free than other styles of music, and cited this as her reason for favoring the musical genre. I found this statement an interesting one, considering the very precise notation found in Debussy’s compositions, detailing articulation, dynamics, tempo, and making qualitative statements about the emotions of various sections. When compared to the music in the Baroque era, in which the notes themselves are unadorned and it is left to the performer to determine the precise stylistic technique, the performer of French Romantic music has a good deal less freedom.

Benner-Savage responded to this question by stating that yes, there is freedom on a technical level to choose ornaments and articulation in Baroque music, but that, “With French music and with Debussy, I think the freedom is more in the composer” (Benner-Savage). She goes on to argue that the freedom of Debussy’s music is a subtler one, in the expression and the overall feel of the music: “The composer’s giving you the notes, but they’re saying, ‘Okay, now let your own input come through.’ But it’s more of an emotional input than something specific, like a trill. You’re not changing the notes per-se, it’s more your emotional input” (Benner-Savage). She followed this statement with an anecdote from a master class she attended, in which a student performed a Bach Sonata that sounded beautiful, but slightly odd; the teacher of the class stopped her and told her that although the performance was beautiful, it sounded like Debussy. He then instructed her to make the music sound like Bach. This suggests, quite

interestingly, that there is a sort of ineffable quality to a performance, that in expression can make a piece sound either Romantic or Baroque, and that each one sounds inappropriate when applied to the music of the other style.

Yet because these expressive decisions are sensed both when we perform and when we listen to a piece, there must be something stylistically done to achieve these different effects. I asked Benner-Savage what is physically changing when we add this kind of expression, and her answer implied that the freedom exists in changes that are too small and subtle to count as specific changes in tempo, dynamics, or accents:

Within the framework of the rhythm you can, not accent, but you can bring out a particular note in a phrase, you can bring it out to just a degree where you're not changing the rhythm of it, but there might be a note in a certain phrase that you can lean on a little more, and its going to sound a little more artistic when you play it through the phrase. And it's going to be the same counting, but it might not sound like it to the listener, it'll sound a lot freer because maybe you leaned on that note just a little bit to make it a little more important, so the rest of them just sort of follow. And you can do it with just a tiny crescendo on that note. So there are actual, technical things to make it sound like we're not being technical, we're just being sexy. It's very subtle, and sometimes it's just a little tiny thing like just the tiniest speeding up of your vibrato will change the entire way it sounds to the person listening.

This seems almost like an encouragement to bend, without breaking, the rules set out by a composer. It is an expressive strategy that requires knowledge of the music and its tone, because it adds moving effects to the music, but only when done well.

Benner-Savage is also very much focused on her body in her playing, concerned with metaphorical imagery, the physical tensions in her body, and a sort of specialized focusing of her mind, to achieve the kind of performance she sees as ideal. When we discussed the smooth, languid execution of the opening line of Debussy's *Prelude to "The Afternoon of a Faun"*, which is rhythmically complicated in order to achieve an effect of freedom, Benner-Savage said: "If you're not holding any stresses in your body, if you have no tension anywhere, your fingers

are going to flow through that... it's not going to sound like you are counting in the background" (Benner-Savage). This is a very physically focused method of approaching the performance of the theme of the music, and requires putting the mind in a state of total relaxation that mirrors the programmatic elements of the sleepy *Prelude*. Although she does not always directly picture the faun himself, Benner-Savage uses similar sleepy images to achieve the languid effect: "That floaty feeling you get just before you go to sleep, where you feel like you're not touching the bed. That's where my mind goes to get the right feel for it, where every muscle in your body is relaxed" (Benner-Savage).

Metaphors and mental images also play a role in the way that Benner-Savage teaches. While teaching a student who carried tension in her body while she played, Benner-Savage encouraged her to think about a bowl of water. "If the water's frozen, you can't put your hands through it, it's hard," she explains. "And if you're playing tense, your body's like the frozen water. But...this water takes on the shape of the bowl. On its own it has no shape, it just oozes all over...you want to be relaxed, like the fresh water in the bowl" (Benner-Savage). Although these images do not relate directly to the extra-musical content of the music she is performing, Benner-Savage's performance method is an interesting one. She seems to assess the emotions expressed in the extra-musical content, and then relate that to another, more personal emotion, which she then expresses in metaphor. What it is, exactly, that these metaphors do to her playing on a physical level, to her fingers and her breath and her embouchure, is not something Benner-Savage expresses. It is perhaps as intangible as the idea of careful practice of a piece followed by a diligent attempt to push that quantitative analysis of the music out of her mind in the moments when she is actually performing the music. Yet if the effects she is striving for in her performance are achieved, and her own metaphors serve to express the emotions intended by the

composer to reflect the passions of the poem, then the performance can be considered successful. There is perhaps no performance-driven reason to explore the method more deeply.

This conversation with Benner-Savage provided interesting insights into the relationship that exists for a performer between the physical action of playing, the emotional expression of the ideas the playing represents, and the cognitive processes of combining these two elements. And all of this is in an effort to join as the third voice in the artistic conversation that exists in the representation of the *Prelude to “The Afternoon of a Faun”*. The balance between respecting the artist who came before and adding one’s own voice into the conversation is a tricky one, but Benner-Savage’s insights about respecting all written notations in the music while adding the subtleties to her performance serves as one answer to this process.

CHAPTER III

Reflection: The Physical Effects of Metaphor on Performance of the *Prelude to “The Afternoon of a Faun”*

Armed with a knowledge of the stylistic and contextual aspects of Stéphane Mallarmé’s poem that are present in Debussy’s music, and thinking about the ideas concerning personal and emotional expression in performance, discussed with Lynnette Benner-Savage, the question now becomes how this information, research, and preparation will affect my performance of the music. This research and conversation have allowed me to undergo the gradual process of determining the performance techniques I will execute in my performance of the music. Performance decisions about stylistic elements of the music are sometimes difficult to put into words; some aspects of the performance will be too subtle to quantify, and others will be sub-conscious. Yet I hope that this reflection will describe the process I have undergone, and highlight some of my experiences observing the physical changes I make in order to achieve certain colors and effects.

The most important part of the programmatic aspect of the *Prelude to “The Afternoon of a Faun”* to keep in mind from my research and study of the poem and the music is that Debussy’s music is not intended to be a line-by-line representation of Mallarmé’s poem. In this way the performance is different from a flute that plays in a pit orchestra for example, where a rapidly descending chromatic line could be used to represent a character making a dramatic fall. It also differs from another work of Debussy that appears in my recital program, the unaccompanied flute piece, *Syrinx*. Although based on the same set of stories from Ovid and both stories about Pan and the nymph Syrinx, the piece differs from the *Prelude to “The Afternoon of a Faun”* in that its intention, when it was composed, was that it would serve as

incidental music in a play called *Psyché* by Gabriel Mourey, that was never finished. As incidental music it was therefore meant to be performed in the background of some action that was taking place on the stage, presumably the moments in which Pan discovers he has unwittingly killed Syrinx, the nymph he desired. In my performance of *Syrinx*, therefore, I am much more conscious of a kind of progression of emotions, and even have a sense of which moment in the music I feel is the moment in which Pan discovers his mistake. This is therefore a different kind of programmatic performance technique than the *Prelude to "The Afternoon of a Faun"*, in which the emotion of the poem is expressed without reflecting any specific plot developments from the poem. Thus, in this piece, the music's relation to the poem is in effect, color, and tone, making the performer's responsibility in representing the poem a different and less explicit one.

The physical act of the faun's awakening from his dream, suggested in the opening lines of Mallarmé's poem, is present in the music in the languid feeling of the first phrases of Debussy's music; and just as in the poem there is a sort of disoriented oddness about the faun's inability to discern the dream from the actual, the music is at once languid and haunting from the opening line. The flute line that opens the music entirely unaccompanied, and the C-sharp, a more difficult note to give a feeling of warmth to on the flute, hangs in the air entirely alone for an unsettlingly indeterminate length of time before it makes its chromatic descent. The effect of the growing warmth and fullness of the orchestration is to give the music a sense of the faun's awakening, and it lightens the uneasiness of those first moments of the faun's consciousness.

In performing these opening lines it is, as Benner-Savage suggests, important to keep those thoughts of the waking faun in mind in order to achieve the emotional effects suggested by the notes. But what does that mean, on a physical level, for the performer? The first thing to

assess is the opening, lingering note. It hangs in the air alone for long enough that the performer very clearly has to do something with it in order to keep it from feeling flat. The idea of making a held note move forward is one described by many flute teachers, and falls under the category of stylistic techniques too subtle to be defined as a change in tempo or dynamics. I found the most effective movement on that opening note to be achieved by a growing fullness in tone; the eerie hollowness of its initial execution can be transitioned smoothly into a fuller tone by dropping the back of the jaw, thus changing the color of the sound, and deepening the vibrato, so that the arc of the wavering the sound takes has greater amplitude. Although in later iterations of the phrase I tend to do this more dramatically, with a definite crescendo, in the opening line I discovered that a subtle change in this direction makes the C-sharp sound ready to fall to the next note when the phrase continues.

As the music progresses and new themes are established, a feeling of longing seems to creep into the emotional effects of the music in various ways, such as when phrases are uttered by one instrument and then echoed through other sections of the orchestra. The yearning, sensual feel of some of these phrases and the full warmth of the orchestration captures the effects of the faun's fantasies and desire to perpetuate the nymphs from his dream. It is therefore the job of the performers to emphasize that initial strangeness and then the sense of longing that follows it in the style of execution of the written notes, using changes in tone and color and other subtle techniques.

Much of the emotion that the music expresses is written into the notes on the page. This was one of Benner-Savage's valuable points about the freedom of the French music written in Debussy's time; the composer gives the music very precise notation that directs the performer through the piece with clearly marked rhythms, dynamics, and articulation. There is no need to

even consider ornamentation, as one would in the Baroque era, because much of the musical lines seem to be drawn out, notated, ornaments themselves. The almost paradoxical idea of the painstakingly precise notation giving the music a free improvised sense is why Debussy seemed so intent on his performers playing his rhythms precisely. Thomas Nyfenger refers to the composer's frustration on this subject in regards to his *Syrinx*: "Debussy is said to have wished that his name had been German, as then performers would have given respect and attention to his notation" (Nyfenger, 127). Because the music that he and other French composers were writing had such a free sound, performers very often feel that they have license to add their own interpretations to the music by making changes to this careful notation. But in terms of the very explicit melodic and stylistic instructions given to us by Debussy, the music is most beautiful and free sounding when it is played with care and accuracy.

So what other physical things can a performer do to add further emphasis to the sentiments Debussy is expressing in his composition? The first is to make changes to the style of execution of the chromatic theme, present throughout the music. The piece takes that line and repeats it throughout the opening of the piece, then moves away from it into new themes and ideas around the middle, and then returns to it again at the end. This is fitting because the chromatic theme is the most languid and sleepy, and is found in the moments when the piece is presumably gesturing at either first waking, or falling back to sleep. But the idea discussed in my research and analysis of the music, that the theme is written with slight differences as the music progresses, suggests that a different kind of tone and color, reflecting a slightly altered emotion, can be used with each one.

From the first to the second iteration of the faun's theme, nothing changes in the flute part; the difference lies in the orchestration, as the first is a solo, unaccompanied flute, and the

second is supported by a string line. Although my musical notation is identical in the two phrases, I do not play them with the same style. The first, unaccompanied line is haunting, and builds strength and fullness gradually, but the second tends to be a bit fuller from the start; the orchestration has added new instruments, so this serves the technical purpose of bringing out the flute line, but it also matches the feeling of a building level of consciousness as the piece picks up energy. This is not so much a change in dynamics as it is an increase in intensity and a change in color.

The next three times that the theme appears, starting at m. 21, the held first note of the phrase is longer, and the second half moves into more rapid and complicated melodies; the held note also changes from C-sharp to A in the second of the three. These changes are signs that the piece is moving away, gradually, from the opening section, and preparing to introduce new themes. The music is continuing to pick up energy, gesturing at the sensual, passionate dream that the faun contemplates in Mallarmé's poem, and in Debussy's music this means fewer solo lines and fuller orchestration, as well as more complicated melodies, throbbing with emotion. Thinking about the faun's building emotion is certainly helpful in this transition and in these more altered iterations of the main theme. It seems that what this does physically to my own performance of the phrases is to increase not just dynamics but the intensity of the vibrato, giving it greater amplitude and energy so that it sounds almost agitated. This, along with the more complicated melodic line, contributes to a change in color for these phrases as well.

The first time the original theme returns, at m. 79, It begins on a new note (E-natural), and in a new time signature (4/4). Yet if you were counting eighth notes at the start of the piece, it will be clear that the rhythms, though notated differently, are identical. Yet the return to the theme, after having moved through such emotional and complicated music in the middle section

of the piece, seems suddenly more simple and exposed. It feels very much like the faun's resigned return to sleep. I've found that the theme as written in m. 79 is my favorite of the ways it is used, perhaps because of the feeling of return, and I try to make that emotion translate into the way I perform it by changing the color of this version of the theme. I've found that it is almost a brighter sound, achieved with a slightly more nasal approach, that makes the return resigned but also a bit unsettling.

And yet we do not get the smooth, backwards movement towards our original sleeping state, but are jarred by these little, lingering bursts of energy at mm. 83 and 90. These moments are most effective when they are set at a contrast to the languid theme, but still have a sense of an almost dying energy. This is done very well by Debussy's rhythmic composition in mm. 92 with the alternation between sextuplets and triplets, creating a kind of swaying, sleepy feel to the line. As the music does eventually move back towards the initial, drowsy feel of the opening, the execution of the last few iterations of the theme should resemble the ones at the start, as all of the distractions of the faun's temporary agitation about his dream drift away as he is transported back to that imagination.

All of these performance techniques fit fascinatingly into Benner-Savage's description of personal expression a performer can execute without actually changing any of the notes on the page. For the most part they are techniques that could not be marked into music, as there is no notation that is designated for stylistic decisions so subtle. They are decisions that stem from the programmatic elements of the music, expressing extra-musical ideas, but they still require a technical and physical change to take place in the body. Very often these decisions are unconscious, and yet bringing them forward into a conscious level of thought can be extremely

helpful in both performance and especially teaching, to understand the full scope of stylistic flute performance.

CHAPTER IV
Olivier Messiaen's *Le Merle Noir*:
Transcription of Birdsong as Compositional Material

Olivier Messiaen's *Le Merle Noir* approaches programmatic music in a unique way because the music itself is representative of another sound and song: the natural call of birdsong, carefully transcribed. Messiaen was commissioned to write *Le Merle Noir* as a competition piece for flute performers studying at the Paris Conservatory. In choosing to portray birdsong in this piece and the many others that came after it, Olivier Messiaen has inspired discussion about the relationship that exists between nature and art, and presents the performer with new questions about the balance between technical accuracy and the emotions and images that exist behind the written notes. By exploring his motives for studying and transcribing birdsong, and his attitudes about his work, we may come to some understanding about the way we should approach *Le Merle Noir* and other birdsong works, as both listeners and performers.

Most of the evidence we have of Messiaen's attraction to birdcall comes from his own lips, in moments when we hear him express his humbling opinion that birds possess more musical capabilities, by design, than humans do, even with the assistance of musical instruments. In *Olivier Messiaen and the Music of Time*, Paul Griffiths quotes Messiaen: "I do not believe one can find in any human music, however inspired, melodies and rhythms which have the sovereign liberty of birdsong" (174). This is quite a bold statement, and implies that Messiaen believes that in studying and notating birdsong, he was tapping into a kind of music unlike anything written by the great composers of the past. To discuss this idea more technically, Messiaen points out in the chapter entitled "My Birds" in an interview published in *Olivier Messiaen, Music and Color: Conversations with Claude Samuel* that birds possess more advanced vocal capabilities in their physical make-up than humans. "They possess a peculiar vocal organ, the syrinx, which allows

them to execute rolls and very small intervals and sing extremely fast” (Glasow, 88). This puts birds at a physical advantage over humans in their abilities to express themselves musically. Yet it also suggests a level of complication in their music that may have caused Messiaen challenges in terms of accuracy when transcribing the birdsong he used in his composition, as the songs he was transcribing must have been both rapidly paced and complicated.

Even with the added challenge of very small intervals and rapidly moving melodies, Messiaen approached his transcriptions as naturally as he could. Griffiths states: “He has detailed how he goes out into the country armed with binoculars, an identification manual, manuscript paper and pencils, taking down the songs as if they were exercised in dictation or folk music to be collected” (170). Messiaen’s limited use of technical resources in creating his transcriptions of birdsong poses many unanswerable questions about the accuracy of his compositions, as we will never be able to listen to the birdsong he heard when he wrote each part. Yet Messiaen appears to have been aware of the challenge this poses and realistic about the limitations he faces in terms of accuracy, forming strategies of circumventing these challenges.

To explain his methods, Messiaen explains: “I am obliged to suppress the very small intervals which our instruments cannot play...but I respect the scale of values between different intervals, that is to say, if several commas correspond to a semitone, then to the true semitone will correspond a whole tone or a third” (Johnson, 107). This enlargement of the intervals between the pitches that the birds are singing implies that Messiaen can detect and measure the smaller intervals himself, with enough accuracy to enlarge them with relative precision. Additionally, we must take into account the challenge presented, even to a gifted composer with perfect pitch, of capturing birdsong that not only moves quickly but does not reliably repeat itself in the same way more than once. If Messiaen is not only transcribing these pitches and rhythms

but also expanding them so they can fit within our own Western conventions of notation, one must wonder if the final transcription is not a compilation of several similar birdsongs, or if Messiaen has taken any liberties with his knowledge of birds and their song to fill in the blanks of an imperfect memory.

Messiaen's method of expanding these too-subtle intervals seems to be a highly technical process, and does preserve the pitch relations on a scale. But with a theoretical thinking about intervals, it is difficult to ignore the idea that certain intervals have more tension than others, and evoke different emotions. So although Messiaen's notational methods provide a kind of map drawn to scale of a bird's song, there can be some question as to whether this preserves the integrity of a bird's song. It is possible, for example, that in listening to the natural song of the blackbird in nature, and then listening to Messiaen's *Le Merle Noir*, the listener may have a difficult time identifying the same birdsong, or its emotional feel. This may be a result of differing emotional sensibilities; in altering the intervals Messiaen is assigning a new emotional system to the birdsong, based on the intervals he chooses; these emotions may differ in another listener, who may come to Messiaen's interpretation of blackbird song and find he does not recognize the sound of the bird in it.

Messiaen himself seems confident but realistic about the issues of accuracy. In a self-assured and yet highly qualified statement to Claude Samuel he says, "Personally I'm very proud of the exactitude of my work; perhaps I'm wrong, because even people who really know the birds might not recognize them in my music, yet I assure you that everything is real" (Glasow, 253). The qualifications do not end there but go on a bit further; yet it is clear even through them that Messiaen feels that he has notated the birdsong he heard with as much accuracy as he feels was possible under his circumstances. And it is arguable that he has, in the manner described

above, captured the formula to a bird's song, but even he qualifies his argument with the admission that the calls may not be recognizable.

Not much has been written on *Le Merle Noir*, the piece that will be discussed in the following chapter about performance techniques, because it is such a small piece compared to Messiaen's other large-scale orchestral, piano, and ensemble pieces that address birdsong. Therefore we may explore Messiaen's work with birdsong largely through his other pieces that have been written with the same motives. In his work *Oiseaux exotiques*, Messiaen combines many of his carefully notated birdcalls into one giant and masterful piece of music. In it, though the birdsongs themselves were taken down with as much accuracy as possible, the assemblage of them into the finished piece is a work of art and not nature. Griffiths writes, "they are all, though, distinctly Messiaen's birds, singing in patterns characteristic of him, but distributing those patterns in complex aerated textures that he might never have invented without the model of the dawn chorus" (175). Thus Griffiths argues that in attempting to compose a piece that recreates the calls of various birds, Messiaen is still revealing a bit of himself in the way he combines the different birdcalls in those songs; the artist, even with an approach so heavily based in transcription and therefore seemingly formulaic, cannot escape putting himself into his art.

This provides a very interesting dynamic between the technical and the creative, and shows us where Messiaen's art meets the nature it seeks to copy. In analyzing Messiaen's *Catalogue d'oiseaux*, which attempts a similar combination of birdcalls, Griffiths makes the point that perhaps the accuracy is not entirely important. "The *Catalogue* could never be a mirror to nature; instead, and much more interestingly, it is a fusion of imitation and imagination...in this perspective, the accuracy of the copy seems rather beside the point" (189). It is important to remember that Messiaen is still attempting to create a work of musical composition, and

therefore must coordinate his birdcalls into something that structurally resembles a formal piece of music.

Much of what Messiaen is concerned with in bringing notated birdcalls into his music seems also to be related to a fascination with the musical tendencies of birds. In his interview with Claude Samuel, Messiaen shared his knowledge of the social uses a bird has for its calls. He points out that birdsong is used for communication, for seduction of a mate, and protection of territory. He describes a bird's mechanism for claiming its territory: "Territorial possession is often regulated by song contests, and if an intruder wishes to occupy a spot that doesn't belong to it, the real owner sings and sings so well that the intruder leaves" Yet Messiaen shows interest in more than just the useful purposes of birdsong when he finishes the list: "most beautiful of all, the free song which salutes the dawning or dying light" (Glasow, 86). This idea, that birds sing at dawn and dusk as a kind of salute to the beauty of the natural process of sunrise and sunset, suggests that birdsong is not merely a useful tool of the bird. It poses the possibility that the bird recognizes beauty, both in the dawn and the dusk, to some degree, and to its own bird song, and provides a romanticized notion that the bird itself is a kind of artist. Messiaen's fascination with the things that drive a bird to sing provides the performer with key insights into his motivations for writing music like *Le Merle Noir*, and clues to the kinds of emotions he hopes the performer will evoke in their interpretation of his composition.

Knowing these things about the motivations birds have for their calls and songs allows us to look closer at *their* stylistic techniques in order to determine our own in performance. In the same interview, Messiaen remarks: "Let's say that the nightingale seems to be passing brusquely from sadness to joy, from anger to renunciation...or from supplication to victory; and it really goes from a slow tempo into a fast one, from a pianissimo nuance to fortissimo, with brusque

and obvious contrasts” (Glasow, 89). We, in listening to the bird’s song, may attribute certain features of music to the emotions they evoke in us as listeners. Yet when we consider that technically all that has changed is the tempo or the dynamics, we can see how the song of a bird can use these melodic elaborations without bearing their emotional implications in mind. As performers, who are fully aware of which of these musical decisions elicit which emotional responses, we may act in with a different purpose than the birds, working backwards. By identifying the emotions we wish to evoke in our performance, and then determining the stylistic musical tools we need to convey those emotions, we can use technical methods to achieve the same kinds of emotional reactions in our audience, but with perhaps more design than the birds.

Yet even if a bird employs stylistic techniques without consideration of their emotional implications, Messiaen does point out that there is a connection between a bird’s relation of music to extra-musical ideas and our own. It is arguable, for example, that our perception of the terms “high” and “low” in relation to musical pitches is a relative one, and exists only because we have assigned them to the spectrum of pitches. Messiaen points out that birds have perceived pitch in the same way: “The meadowlark...sings in midair while flying. Its flight pattern includes a quasi-vertical ascent...short stops in midair...and a nosedive...Its song, divided between a high note and a low note, follows these stages” (Glasow, 89). The meadowlark’s visual representation of its own birdsong is very human in nature, and an interesting example of the possibility of a bird’s similar understanding of the relationship that exists between “high” and “low”. Yet it is just as possible that the bird’s flight pattern was a coincidence, and so example seems to pose just an interesting possibility.

In Carla Huston Bell’s book *Olivier Messiaen*, she spends an entire chapter on *Le Merle Noir* and makes some important observations about the way in which Messiaen’s unconventional

composition reflects the blackbird as his subject matter. The most obvious way that *Le Merle Noir* differs from traditional music is in its total lack of a time signature or regulated measure length. Bell explains this by pointing out that Messiaen's "rhythmic patterns adhere to strict time values, using the short or primary note value (chronos protos) and its free multiplication in the manner of ancient Greeks" (109). Note lengths are therefore based on one another, and in the section widely considered the B section, which comes after the first flute cadenza, it seems the only way to confidently count the rhythm is to count it in relation to its smallest part, the sixteenth note. This idea frees the section up from metrical traditions of emphasis on the beat; not just emphasis on the Western style's usually-stressed beats of one and three, or of the downbeat of a measure, but of emphasis on any whole or even half beat. Because Messiaen uses the sixteenth note as the beat by which we must relate everything, the emphasis becomes more complicated than syncopation, and can only be made smooth by counting sixteenth notes in learning the rhythms. As freeness is one of the things Messiaen professes to admire most about birdsong, it is fitting that *Le Merle Noir* is so unrestricted in its meter, and so decidedly not metronomic. Yet this feeling of freedom is an illusion for the sake of the audience, achieved when the performer carefully masks the fact that she is counting rapid, equal sixteenth notes in order to move from note to note with such seeming spontaneity.

In analyzing a piece of music it is traditional to look at overall structure, and then consider the phrases that are repeated to serve as themes throughout the piece. This is not possible in *Le Merle Noir*. Though there are certainly sections in the structure of the piece, the A' section that comes when there is a second flute cadenza similar to the one at the start of the piece does not have any phrases that match the original A section completely. Bell writes: "Because of the essentially non-repetitive nature of birdsong, thematic processes along

traditional lines are not suitable” (113). Just as Messiaen did not have the luxury to hear the birds he observed in nature repeat their birdsongs again, we may hear the blackbird in his *Le Merle Noir* sing a melody similar to one we’ve heard before, but it will not be exactly identical to anything we’ve yet heard in earlier sections. This is particularly obvious in the frantic final third of the piece, when the birdsong becomes a rapid string of phrases that all use a similar pitch scale and rhythm, but no two phrases are exactly identical, and the progression of the phrases follows no identifiable formula. Messiaen must employ some manipulation to his birdsong, and therefore structures the phrases into a format that moves from cadenzas in an unregulated meter, to longer lyrical passages, and peaks with a kind of frenzied exchange with piano. But he still retains the integrity of the free-form phrasing by refusing to turn a few of his birdsongs into repeated themes, and forcing both the performer and the listener into a state of constant attention, because every phrase will provide something new.

Knowing Messiaen’s motives for exploring birdsong and the struggles he faces in balancing the accuracy of his transcriptions with his other artistic intentions, it becomes easier to approach his *Le merle noir* as a listener and a performer. An understanding of birdsong, firstly, is important. Griffiths writes in his chapter “Birdsong” that after writing *Reveil des oiseaux*, another piece based in birdsong, Messiaen “advis[ed] the pianist, who has to offer an ‘imitation of the attacks of a very large number of birds,’ to make ‘a few forest walks, in springtime, especially early in the morning, to familiarize herself with her models’” (168). When asked to imitate something that exists in nature, a performer does bear some responsibility to be very familiar with that which she is imitating. This is particularly true with the cadenzas in *Le Merle Noir* because of the performance tendency to play the various phrases with a kind of spontaneous feel, breaking up some phrases more and grouping others as a single idea, with pauses between

these ideas that are of an indistinct period of time. All of these ideas are based in knowledge of the spontaneity of birdsong, so the performer should arguably be as familiar with the subject as possible.

When *Le merle noir* is performed as part of a program, it seems important to the audience's appreciation of the performance that they know the background information about the blackbird as the source of the music's melodies. Messiaen hoped that listeners would be able to relate to these birdcalls, as he said in his interview with Claude Samuel: "Knowing the bird and the landscape I want to depict must impart particular pleasure for the listener who rediscovers these elements as one rediscovers friends, childhood memories, or certain things lost in the back of the mind" (Glasow, 96). Thus even the listener carries some responsibilities to be familiar with birdsong in order to have a full appreciation for the composition.

Olivier Messiaen's *Le Merle Noir* poses new challenges and expectations to the performer in preparing this music, because of its specific programmatic tendencies; an understanding of the composer's intentions and impressions of the birds he is representing is essential for an informed performance. It is undoubtedly the performer's responsibility to use the knowledge gained about Messiaen's motives in composition, his methods in transcription, and his opinions of birds to add new levels of meaning to her performance of *Le Merle Noir*. Yet it is only through a conscious study of our own physical actions as we play the music with its extra-musical themes in mind that we may come to some kind of understanding of what this knowledge and emotional influence actually does to affect the performer's playing.

CHAPTER V

A Discussion with Professor William Matthews: Understanding Messiaen Through Birdsong, Theory, and Religion

It is a very different programmatic challenge that Olivier Messiaen's *Le Merle Noir* presents to the performer; unlike Debussy's *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun*, there is a direct relation between the music and its extra-musical influences both in meaning and in sound. Knowing, through research, the methods Messiaen used to collect birdsong and his opinions of the power of the raw, accurately transcribed music, the performer is responsible for realizing these notated birdsong in a way that represents a bird's song, and even *is* birdsong, to the listener. To further explore this idea, and to consider the process the music takes in this piece, from natural birdsong, overheard, to written music, to a flute performance, I talked with Professor William Matthews, a music professor at Bates College and a flautist with knowledge of Messiaen's life and compositions, as well as an interest in birdsong. Our conversation explored the kinds of preparation a performer can do to best represent birdsong as Messiaen heard it; by gaining a familiarity of a bird's physical capacity for birdsong and even imagining its own perception of it, as well as understanding Messiaen's other compositional work that deals with birdsong and religion, a performer can gain a greater understanding of the many ideas, both technical and emotional, about birds that have been condensed into this short competition piece².

We began our discussion, after listening to a recording of *Le Merle Noir*, with the topic of the bird's physical characteristics, and how their heightened sensitivity when it comes to producing and perceiving sound contributes to the very complicated nature of birdsong. The ideas Messiaen himself expresses, described in the previous chapter, about his need to make slight changes to his transcription because of this difference in sensitivity, came up immediately.

² See 'Appendix B' for the fully transcribed interview with Professor William Matthews.

Matthews explains: “birds have advanced voice boxes, they have what’s called a syrinx, and some birds have two of them, which makes them sing really tiny intervals within themselves. So by default when he notated those single lines he was always dropping notes” (Matthews). This understanding speaks to the idea that the transcribed birdsong cannot be entirely accurate and still be expressed using standard musical notation. It also gives a performer an idea about the slightness of the pitches and the importance of a kind of chromaticism in the scales Messiaen writes the various birdsongs in.

Just as their pitches are drawing from a scale with much smaller intervals, Matthews points out that their rhythms are complicated, seeming at first to be the same, but then containing some subtle, very slight variation that set them apart from other iterations:

So this is a grace note that turns into a sixteenth note here; it’s the same thing with tiny little differences and that is in fact how birds usually sing. Even when it seems like they’re repeating themselves, there’ll be some single note, if you’re thinking about notes, that’s different, or the rhythm is a little bit different, or there’ll be a glissando where there wasn’t one. So even when a bird is known for a particular song, that song will always be ever so slightly varied. It might have to do with the rhythms, but every time will be just a little bit different. So this is very much taken from how birds perform, with the kind of ostinato that just changes a little bit every time (Matthews).

This idea that a bird’s sense of time is also more sensitive than our own gives a new understanding to the performer about the precision of performing *Le Merle Noir*. A section with heavily staccato articulation puts a good deal of pressure on a performer to play the notes as lightly as a bird. The slight variation in the rhythmic lines also serves as an example of Messiaen’s efforts to represent the spontaneity of birdsong. The idea of notating a precise set of birdsongs in a permanent way, so that *Le Merle Noir* will be a performance of the exact same series of notes every time it is played, is contrary to the idea of the sporadic, constantly changing style of birdsong. Messiaen accounts for this in his composition by taking a phrase and repeating it, almost precisely, with some very subtle rhythmic differences. This is particularly evident in

the last third of the piece, when the flute line plays a rapid set of bird songs, all using the same set of pitches in almost the same ways, but with rapid grace notes making slight alterations to the lines sometimes, and other times the phrase starting in a different place, or adding a few notes to the beginning. Thus Messiaen creates the effect of constantly changing birdsong within the lines of *Le Merle Noir* itself, even though the piece as a whole will remain stagnant, on the level of pitches and rhythms, from one performance to the next.

Matthews is intrigued by this idea of a heightened sensitivity in bird song, and points out in our conversation that if they can hear these much smaller, more precise intervals, and their birdsong is so quick and complex, rhythmically, this calls into question what is going on in their minds as they sing; do the intervals and rhythms in their birdsong sound larger, and slower, than they do to us? “I’ve often wondered about a bird’s psychology. What is a bird’s sense of time? I mean, their hearts beat very fast, and they seem very quick to us. The way they move, the way they sing, and they’re just really very quick and very alert, and so I’m wondering if time to them seems quick” (Matthews). To some degree, of course, this quick and alert nature of a bird’s song is written into the notes, especially in the sections marked *Modéré* in *Le Merle Noir* that comes at the start of the piece, and then again at the first part of the middle section of the music, which I have called the cadenzas. These cadenzas jump intervals quickly, stop short on an eighth note marked staccato, or decrescendo rapidly into nothingness. Yet in a stylistic performance, a flutist can bring out the quickness of a blackbird even further.

Matthews and I discussed the ways in which these quick, cadenza-style passages can be performed to sound more like birdsong, and our discussion began with a performer’s mindset. Matthews suggests: “I would think of myself as a blackbird. Which might mean you’re out of control, you’re not in your human mind, you are as I said existing on this other plane where time

is happening very quickly and very jerkily.” But what does this “out of control” mentality, one that considers itself out of the human mentality, do to a performance on a physical level?

Matthews points to the attack of the notes: “Very short releases, very strong accents. He gives you phrasing, so I would accent the beginning. He doesn’t say diminuendo, but a bird would probably diminuendo at the end of a phrase, so I would almost think of that note there as swallowed.” This idea of swallowing a note that decrescendos quickly at the end of the phrase appealed to me, because it was one that had occurred to me in my own practice. It is an idea, therefore that is perhaps suggested by the written notes, but is more easily recognized when the performer has the mentality of a bird in mind. Having listened to birdsong, my familiarity with the way a bird’s song dies out suddenly, as if swallowed, made it easier for me to make this connection as well.

To further his point about the mindset he is suggesting for performance, Matthews talks about how in *Le Merle Noir*, a performer’s typical responsibility for evenness of tone in execution is not as strict; the importance lies in the perkiness of the rhythm and the style:

I mean, when he writes something like this, here, it looks like he’s got a five-note phrase where all the notes are of equal weight—birds don’t do that, there are some notes that are swallowed, there’s some notes that are barely heard, there are some notes that are surprisingly accented. So I would not go out of my way to be even, I would go out of my way to allow unevenness. A high pitch is going to be louder, its going to jump out at you—let it do that. Normally, if you were playing a smooth, melodic tune, human music, you would back off on a really high note, so it wouldn’t scream. I would let it scream (Matthews).

In this way, performance technique in *Le Merle Noir* differs from other traditional repertoire, and definitely from the techniques of execution necessary to Debussy’s *Prelude to “The Afternoon of a Faun”*. Instead of attempting to express an idea, emotion, feeling, or even a progression of plot, in *Le Merle Noir* the performer is recreating a sound. If the blackbird puts unequal weight on the notes in a phrase, or lets a sudden, higher pitch shriek in the middle of a phrase, then the

flute is freed of its traditional performance limits of smooth, even sound, and it too can play the phrases in this style.

This analysis and the techniques used to express the blackbird's style in performance are all very fitting to the rapid cadenzas that make up a good portion of *Le Merle Noir*. But there are these other, lyrical sections to the piece that follow the cadenzas, and these do not seem to fit without characterizations of the quickness of the blackbird. Matthew's first thoughts on the subject are theoretical. He suggests a closer look at the pitches in the lyrical section, in comparison to the cadenzas: "Does this pitch series come from any of this? Do you find your fingers following a familiar path when you play this, that may come from up here?" (Matthews). The instinct in this suggestion is that these lyrical section is where we see Messiaen's compositional hand come into the piece, elaborating on the bird's song with a more drawn out, slow rhythm.

If this is the case, then what is the purpose of these slower sections? Messiaen's goal in representation of birdsong here is quite obviously not accuracy; no blackbird has been caught on record singing the long, lyrical ballad of a phrase found immediately following the opening "Modéré" section. Matthews provides one possibility:

If I were playing it I might think this [the first section] is the bird, and this [the second section] is what the bird thinks. This is what the bird sings, and this is how the bird hears it and what the bird thinks about it. So I would take that approach—I mean, he says tenderly, but you don't think of birds as tender, they're the opposite of tender. You know, they're not soft, they're never relaxed, they're not soothing, they're always on edge. But this lyrical part is so smooth and consistent. So this first section might be the blackbird, and the second section might be his love for the blackbird.

This is a very interesting thought because it suggests that idea that we started our discussion with, of a bird's heightened sense of pitch and time. Matthews suggests two possibilities in this explanation. The first is that the lyrical section is how the bird hears his own song, and the

second is that the section is a kind of stylistic ode to the bird, composed by Messiaen. The first option seems the most intriguing, as this is where the possibility of getting inside the bird's rapidly moving mind comes into play. We are therefore hearing a new bird song, but one slowed down into bird-time. This idea provides an explanation even for the obscurity of the beat in this passage; in the research chapter preceding our discussion, the idea came up that the slower sections move from note to note sporadically and exist in uneven bars with no set time signature. If we are, in fact, hearing a slowed version of the bird's typical song, then there is no reason why that song should be limited to the beat of the quarter note or a sense of regular measures or beats. In order to count this section, you have to break each note down to the level of sixteenth note; thus even slowed down, the bird's song is too rhythmically complex for traditional notation.

Whether Messiaen uses these slower sections to give us an idea of birdsong the way it hears it, or to express his own ideas of a bird's uniquely beautiful music, there is still an element of interpretation necessary to an effective performance of these sections. The idea that these lyrical sections allow Messiaen's own beliefs about the beauty of birdsong, even as a kind of religious passion, is one Matthews discussed, shedding light on some very interesting details about Messiaen's own spiritual beliefs. Describing a later piece composed by Messiaen about St. Francis of Assisi, a saint known to commune with the birds, Matthews points out the religious implications of Messiaen's interest in birdsong. "It's all mixed up, the belief and the religiosity, and the love of natural song. I think Messiaen would have said that this [the first part] is pure, unmediated song from God. No human corruption has intervened" (Matthews). Matthews goes on to say that if the first section is the perfect, unmediated song from God, the faithfully transcribed notes of the bird's song, then the second is, "how can humans seek to perfect themselves, with the most beautiful harmonies and melodies they can think of." It is, according

to Matthews, man's attempt to make something beautiful of the notes provided in these transcendent melodies, by transforming them into these lyrical, prayer-like phrases.

The question then arises, once again, of how these ideas may be transferred into performance on a physical level. Where the rapid birdsong lent a description of this answer to details about articulation, dynamics, and release, Matthews provided a more intangible answer to the physical execution of these phrases:

You should play this like a prayer, as a prayer. You're addressing what you're playing to some ineffable. And you're expressing something ineffable. So we're beyond words, we're transcending words, so I can't find words to explain it. But if you think of this as a sort of glowing expression of your tenderness and your profound gratitude for a miracle or whatever, that's what Messiaen's doing here.

Although much of what Matthews describes about the performance techniques necessary to an effective performance is precise and technical, in this moment, describing these phrases, his suggestions about frame of mind and spirituality seem to resemble Benner-Savage's advice for performance of Debussy's *Prelude to "The Afternoon of a Faun"*. Perhaps it is because these sections are the moments in the piece where, instead of recreating sound and melody provided by the bird's song, the performer is creating the effect and emotional feel of the bird, and its own unique musicality.

My discussion with Professor William Matthews provides some new perspectives on Messiaen's approach to composing *Le Merle Noir*, about the nature of birds and their own perception of birdsong, and about the varying ways a performer can approach the very different sections found in the piece. Matthews also provided an interesting set of suggestions for a further understanding of the music, and exploring these ideas will be beneficial to my own performance decisions and approach to the music. Matthews suggests, firstly, that a performer get inside the notes of the music, and compare the pitch series utilized by the first section and its relationship to

the sections that follow. He also suggests a greater familiarity with the calls of birds, and particularly of blackbirds, so that the performer can create the spontaneous effect of birdsong in playing the piece. Finally, Matthews suggests a greater understanding of Messiaen's other compositions, particularly those that feature birdsong. He also suggests exploring the performances of his wife, the French pianist Yvonne Loriod; because she premiered all of his music, it is arguable that her interpretation of the music is the closest to Messiaen's intentions, providing the ultimate example of performance practice to any performer on any instrument. In the chapter that follows, I hope to explore each of these different possibilities with our discussion and my own research in mind, in order to form the performance decisions I will make, in my own performance and interpretations of this piece.

CHAPTER VI
**Reflection: Engaging with the Notations and Composer of *Le Merle Noir*,
and the Physicality of Becoming the Blackbird**

The flute has long been the instrument responsible for representing the sound of birdsong in orchestration, perhaps because of its high pitch and light sound. Yet Olivier Messiaen's *Le Merle Noir* moves beyond the standard acceptance of the idea that a trill, at the right moment in the music, can represent birdsong, or a bird in flight; the fact that his compositions are notated birdsong themselves puts a new performance expectation on the flute performer, erasing all conventional, symbolic gestures at birdsong and demanding a sense of accuracy. After exploring Messiaen's compositional techniques and his musical and spiritual affinity for birdsong, and then discussing how these compositional influences affect the way a performer approaches the piece, I have discovered that the most important elements of the performance of *Le Merle Noir* are: a confident familiarity with the notes and the technical components of Messiaen's composition, a sense of comfort with the cadence of birdsong and the spirit of its spontaneity, and a firm grasp on Messiaen's style as a composer. In considering these three ideas, I hope that my performance of *Le Merle Noir* will balance the technical and the emotional aspects of birdsong, both as Messiaen experienced it, and as I have.

In our discussion of *Le Merle Noir*, Professor William Matthews suggested that the shift in style from the cadenza-like sections marked "Modéré" to the more lyrical themes, marked "Presque lent, tendre", may be only a change in the rhythms, and that the pitch series used in both might be the same. I found in my own analysis of the piece that this was not the case, but a close look at the pitch series in each section did provide some key insights into Messiaen's approaches to each of the stylized sections of birdsong. The two "Modéré" sections that occur,

one at the start of the piece and one in the middle, utilize the same pitch series. The two lyrical sections marked *tendre*, both of which follow immediately after a “*Modéré*” section, both use the same pitch series, but one that is different from their preceding cadenzas. The final third of the piece, denoted by the marking of “*Vif*”, uses a third pitch series for the entirety of the frantic closing of the piece.

What is most interesting about the two “*Modéré*” cadenzas is the great amount of variation Messiaen achieves within and between the sections; although he uses the same pitch series in the same style in both sections, there is no phrase that is ever repeated, identically from one cadenza to the other, or even within each of the cadenzas. Within each cadenza there are patterns that repeat within phrases, but the phrase itself will always be offset by a few notes at the beginning or an added bit at the end. This compositional style reflects the challenges of transcription discussed in my research, in which Messiaen notated the birdsong he heard on the spot once, unrecorded, and then never heard repeated. Perhaps Messiaen’s skill at transcription allowed him to keep up with these constantly changing birdsongs; but it is equally possible that the changes were made later, in the composition of *Le Merle Noir*, with the tendencies of changing birdsong in mind. We cannot know which of these is the case, but it is almost irrelevant; the importance lies in the fact that the lack of repetition in the cadenzas reflects the tendency of birdsong to change, keeping the same basic structure of phrasing and intervals but making tiny adjustments to each iteration.

The lyrical “*Tendre*” sections of the piece present compositional variety in another way. Although, as described before, they utilize a different series of pitches from the “*Modéré*” sections before them, the phrases are identical in terms of pitch, intervals, and note duration. The second “*Tendre*” section assigns the flute line the same phrases twice; in the first, the flute and

piano alternate their performance of the line, creating a call and response effect. In the second, the flute and piano are playing the same phrases, but offset so that they move through the phrases at different times. Yet the most interesting difference between the two sections is the offset nature of the beats of the phrases in the second “Tendre” section. As discussed previously, the lines tend to move at unpredictable times, forcing the performer to think on the level of the sixteenth note—this reflects the precise and quick nature of birds and the way Messiaen presumes they hear their own song. Yet in the second “Tendre” section, the same rhythmic phrase as the first is offset by a single sixteenth note, so that the whole thing takes place a quarter of a beat earlier than it did in the first time it was played. This is really just a change in the notation, so that two sixteenth notes need to be tied together to make an eighth because they exist between the beats of the meter. Yet the displacement is only in the flute part, so it also serves the purpose of setting the flute and the piano off by a quarter of a beat, creating a chaotic sense when the two instruments are constantly moving at different times. In this way traditional methods of comparing the two and where they begin are irrelevant, particularly because of the lack of meter in the music; what matters then, is the relation of the flute part to the piano, and the fact that they are off-set, as in all other ways the phrases in the two sections will sound the same. This lack of stability of meter, and relationship between voices as the point of stability, emphasizes the quickness of birds by breaking down our structure for beats and meter into smaller parts than we count, suggesting that even when birdsong is slowed down, it moves by smaller degrees, in more complex ways.

The final third of *Le Merle Noir*, the section marked “Vif”, utilizes a third pitch series that seems to draw notes from a combination of the two sections preceding it. The core of almost every phrase in the “Vif” section seems to be the three notes used in the first phrase and measure

of the section: A-natural, G-natural, and high G-sharp. They are the only three notes used in the repeated nine-note phrase that starts the section, and they continue to play an important role in the elaborated phrases that follow. In the flute part, the first phrase repeats several times, with some added variation. It is then elaborated upon for the middle part of the “Vif” section, and the section returns to the original phrases in the flute part twelve measures from the end and repeats it once more, to close the piece. Although the flute part returns to this original phrasing, the piano is in a different place than it was at the start of the “Vif” section. The first time the phrase was iterated, piano and flute began together; as the section moves on the parts move in very different ways, and when the flute returns to the opening phrase of the section, the piano is still moving through its own phrases. Yet the piano cuts out as the flute finishes that phrase, and the two instruments play the closing phrases in turns. Thus even the repetition of this opening theme in the “Vif” section at the end is not a strict repetition, because of the changes that the piano part provides.

This is another example of that sensation you experience when listening to birdsong, where it feels as if the same song is being repeated, and then is changed. It also provides a feeling of frantic emotion that makes a good climactic moment for the piece as a whole. Yet keeping the core of the phrase in mind, in the case of this section, and the idea of the pitch series used in the other two sections, is very helpful in preparing *Le Merle Noir* for performance; an insight into the composer’s intention with his notes not only makes the physical act of learning the notes easier, it helps give the performance a greater sense of the phrase, so that the core of the section and its elaborations can be performed with the proper amount of emphasis.

The next element of performance preparation mentioned by Matthews in our discussion of *Le Merle Noir* is an understanding of birdsong—of the blackbird specifically, but also of birds

in general, in the cadences of their songs and in the seeming spontaneity with which they start up their song again after a pause. Since beginning to prepare Messiaen's flute piece for my recital, I have experienced a heightened awareness of the birdsong around me, particularly early in the morning and at sunset. The birdsong I have experienced in recent months has of course been more sparse and unpredictable than the musical composition *Le Merle Noir*, but the space between their birdsong called to mind my memories of listening to birdsong in the morning, growing up.

When I was very young my grandfather, who taught me to whistle, taught me a series of whistles that sounded very much like the song of a bird common to our area. Because my bedroom window overlooked a small wooded area, I often woke in the morning to the sound of this birdsong. From my bed I enjoyed whistling it back to the birds in the space between their own song. On occasion I would time my responses perfectly, and would feel as if I was in conversation with the birds out my window; other times they would begin their birdsong before I finished, or start up again after a pause. What is interesting is that it was always the same general amount of time between repetitions of the song, yet I could never know for sure when the bird would start the phrase. This suggests something about methods of approaching the opening cadenza and the other "Modéré" section at the beginning of the piece: to think like a bird in these parts of the piece and play as if I am a blackbird does not require counting, but a sense of instinct in these pauses, so that the next phrase comes out in a sudden burst when the moment feels right. It is perhaps for this reason that Messiaen leaves these sections in an unaccompanied, cadenza style; without coordination with piano, the flute line can feel free and spontaneous.

Yet it is also important to gain a sense of the sound of the blackbird, specifically, in order to prepare for a performance of *Le Merle Noir*. This is made difficult by the idea discussed in

earlier chapters that Messiaen did not make recordings of bird song at this point in his life, as well as the fact that we do not know which specific type of blackbird Messiaen was listening to when he composed the piece. In order to explore the various types of blackbird and compare their sounds to *Le Merle Noir*, I utilized the website database of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, on Matthews' recommendation. Of the four species of blackbird the site listed, the Red-winged Blackbird and the Rusty Blackbird seemed to have the most tuneful birdsongs, but there was no one species with calls similar enough to the phrases of *Le Merle Noir* to allow for a confident guess at the species of Messiaen's bird. Even without knowledge of the specific species of blackbird in his piece, listening to their songs gives a new perspective on Messiaen's skills of transcription; hearing how short the phrases of each bird's song is, and yet how many notes are hit in that short space, gives a sense of context to the timing and phrasing of his composition. It also calls to mind Matthews' comment about the flexibility within these quick phrases when it comes to evenness of notes and smoothness of pitch. The notes of the blackbird's song seem to blend together, and so his point that the glossing over or swallowing of some notes, as is natural in the rapid playing of the flute, would in fact reflect the natural song of the bird. This should be taken as a license to perform with a different kind of sound in the playing of *Le Merle Noir*; it is a sound that to Western Classical tradition would seem raw and less polished than a Bach sonata or Debussy's lyrical chromatic phrases. Yet it is merely a new style, one set apart from Western tradition, that values a different approach to projection and articulation, and it is therefore important to step outside of the limits of the traditions of Western thought in order to approach this style. It seems that much of a performance of blackbird song lies in the bold and spontaneous bursts of passion, and so a well-prepared performance will embody the spirits and energy of the blackbird in addition to the technical quickness of fingers.

The final method of preparation for an informed performance of *Le Merle Noir* is a familiarity with Messiaen's other works that relate to birdsong. In my search for recordings of this music I followed Matthews' suggestion to listen to recordings of Messiaen's wife performing birdsong; in the previous chapter Matthews explains how Yvonne Loriod debuted all of Messiaen's music, and how this suggests his comfort with and trust of her performances of his compositions. I listened to Yvonne Loriod performing *Reveil des Oiseaux* with the Orchestre National de France, performed in 1996.

In this piece, the birdsong in the first movement begins with Loriod alone on piano before growing in complexity, layering many instruments playing various birdsongs on top of one another. It then moves to a section with a thinner orchestration, where instruments play phrases of birdsong alone, and sometimes with just piano, and eventually moves back to the complex layering of birdsong. In some ways this seems like a grander, more complex orchestration of Messiaen's *Le Merle Noir*, in which the flute performs a cadenza alone, then plays a section as a call and response with the piano, and then the complexity grows as the two parts begin to play birdsong that is offset by only a fraction of a beat, moving in very different sections. Listening to the second movement of *Reveil des Oiseaux* it becomes clear that Messiaen saw the potential in the full orchestra to expand on this sense of chaos, as the entire orchestra moves in different times through different phrases of birdsong at once, creating a chaotic and exciting mix of birdsongs that stop suddenly, as one.

Listening to *Reveil des Oiseaux* also provided a further understanding of Messiaen's tendency to stick to one phrase representing a birdsong, and have it repeated many times, with slight variations, for some period of time. This is the case in the second movement of the piece especially. In the chaos of different birdsongs that makes up the majority of the movement,

Messiaen changes the expectations of orchestration. A typical orchestra piece will move from theme to theme one at a time, with various instruments picking up on the core phrase of that theme and perhaps adding some elaboration, before the next theme is introduced. Any overlapping of various themes is done carefully and tastefully, so that the different themes each come through in their own way and complement one another. In *Reveil des Oiseaux*, each instrument seems to carry its own theme, presenting the core phrase and elaborating on it as the flute line does in *Le Merle Noir*. Yet each instrument goes through this process with its own phrase, at the same time as all the others. This creates a sense of chaos that defies the normal procedure of orchestral music, but gestures very nicely to the natural tendencies of birds, suggesting an assemblage of different birds, maybe all the same species, maybe each different, but each with its own song elaborations on it, sometimes reacting to and sometimes ignoring the birdsong around it.

The orchestral arrangement of *Reveil des Oiseaux*, and the way in which various instruments interact with one another to create birdsong, requires a more careful look at the relationship between the flute and the piano in *Le Merle Noir*. It is a gradual buildup of importance that the piano seems to take on over the course of the piece. At the start, the piano seems only used for added emotional elements; a low, dramatic run before the flute cadenza sets up a kind of feeling of tense alertness. In the first “Tendre” section, the piano is the voice that initiates the lyricism of the section, and the piano and flute interact like two birds who’ve just noticed one another. The piano cuts out again for the second cadenza, and then plays a more prominent role as an alternate voice in the second “Tendre” section, off-set from the flute line. It is the final third of the piece where the two parts each unravel into separate frantic phrases, each following their own patterns and series of phrases and escalating the tension of the piece as a

whole. When both instruments finish the section quite suddenly, the piece closes with a few short, accented phrases exchanged between the two parts. Understanding this relationship between the flute and piano, and the ways in which this relationship changes over the course of the piece adds to the sense of the overall arc of the music and shows how repeated sections, such as the “Tendre” section in the flute part, are not just a static repetition, but a part of the progression forward in the music. It is important to note that *Le Merle Noir* is not a piece for unaccompanied flute; the piano part serves as an important mechanism for moving the music forward, and keeping these repeated sections from seeming static. Perhaps, in the case of the moments where flute and piano form a kind of call and response, piano functions as another bird in conversation with the flute; or perhaps the piano is the bird’s environment, a backdrop to the birdsong. Looking at the piano part in this way, and considering issue its role presents to both the performer and the listener, is a helpful thing to consider in our approach to *Le Merle Noir*.

A performer approaching *Le Merle Noir* finds a piece with unique relationships between the music and its composer, the music and its subject of birdsong, and the composer and the subject of birdsong. In order to perform this piece, Matthews suggests that a flutist needs to “be the bird”. Yet in order to become, in one’s own mind, a blackbird, seems only part of the process. The blackbird the performer becomes must be a hybrid of the performer’s own impressions of birdsong and of the perception Messiaen has of birds and birdsong. This returns us to the idea of the lyrical “Tendre” sections of *Le Merle Noir* and the question posed in an earlier chapter of what to make of those moments. After spending time focusing on what it means to “be the bird”, I have found that this section functions best for me as an expression of the bird’s own thoughts about its song, slowed down, as Matthews has suggested as one possibility. The lyricism of the phrasing combined with the spontaneity of the rhythms and

unavoidable complexity, even when slowed down, suggests a kind of representation of the bird's thoughts. The strange lyric nature of the lines calls to mind images of a proud bird ruffling its feathers. This interpretive decision will play a role in the manner in which I perform *Le Merle Noir* in my recital, and could only have been reached through an understanding of Messiaen's compositional aims, and a familiarity with the birdsong his music represents. Such performance decisions are valuable evidence of the results of engaging with not just the notes of the music, but also the context of their programmatic elements and the salient aspects of the composer's feelings on the context and substance of his music.

CHAPTER VII
**J.S. Bach's *Flute Sonata in E-Flat Major, BWV 1031*:
Performance Practice in the Context of the Baroque Era and the Galant Style**

J.S. Bach's *Flute Sonata in E-Flat Major, BWV 1031* is noted for its differences from Bach's earlier works in its embracing of the popular galant style of composition, but is not composed to represent any kind of extra-musical narrative or idea. In this way it is very different from the pieces by Messiaen and Debussy discussed previously; yet it seems there is a kind of tone and character to Baroque music, and to the works of J.S. Bach, that a performer very often brings to her modern rendition of his musical works, that can be explored to represent a kind of programmatic element in itself. Between what we know of Bach's style, his biography and skills as a musician, and the performance tradition we rely on when we approach Baroque music, it seems that we bring a great deal of extra-musical ideas into our approaches of performance of the works of J. S. Bach.

In spite of the great deal of literature on Bach's life and his many compositions, compiling a cohesive collection of written studies that combines biography with analysis of his music has been a challenge. Because this study focuses on the ways in which our knowledge of Bach manifests itself in a performer's playing, this presents itself as a boundary to be crossed. Biographers have also taken note of this issue, and in his essay "New Perspectives on Bach Biography" in *Bach: Essays on his Life and Music*, Christoph Wolff highlights this as a challenge of biography as a whole, as the genre pertains to artists. Biographies of artists "aim at interpretation of the complicated and many-layered interrelationship" between the artist and his work, "but the ideal case of a complete, coherent, and logical presentation of a 'life and works' story without gaps can hardly be realized" (Wolff, 3). What Wolff points to here is the issue of interpretation: how much does an artist's biography relate to his art? It is a question more often

raised about the life and works of writers, whose poetry and prose assume the voice of a speaker that may or may not be interpreted as representative of the artist himself. With music it is a less explicit relationship; while the lack of language that reflects distinct ideas and emotions makes it more difficult to draw connections between the artist and his work, there is much to be explored in his influences, experiences, and the style he chooses to write in.

Robert L. Marshall also points out this challenge of relating the biography of a composer to his music, and poses it as a challenge to future Bach scholars. He argues that the disciplines of biographical studies, textual criticism, and stylistic analysis of Bach's life and music have been explored as separate entities and says, "I suspect that in the future the most important advances in Bach scholarship are likely to be achieved only by uniting these three disciplines" (Marshall, 224). It is therefore a gap in Bach scholarship that, according to Marshall, needs filling. An exploration of the influences of Bach's biography on his music and the way it is performed by modern musician represents an attempt to fill this gap.

It is also undeniable that scholars have established a level of expectation for the kind of style found in Bach's compositions; this is illustrated by the way in which Bach scholars have approached controversy over whether musical composition of questionable origin were, in fact, composed by J.S. Bach, or by others, such as his son C.P.E. Bach. This is the case in the flute sonata that serves as my performance example both in the performance discussion that follows and in my own performance program, J.S. Bach's *Flute Sonata in E-Flat Major, BWV 1031*. Because the piece was written in the more modern and more popular "galant" style, many scholars have argued that it was composed by C.P.E. Bach, who composed other pieces in a similar style under his father's supervision. Robert L. Marshall entertains this possibility, but ultimately concludes that J.S. Bach did compose the E-flat Sonata. After drawing this

conclusion, he makes an indictment of scholars who make assumptions about J.S. Bach's compositions based on style: "it seems that our notions of the Bach style have been unjustifiably restricted and marked by our inability to imagine that the greatest master of the arts of counterpoint...could, at certain times and on certain appropriate occasions, also deliberately cultivate a lighter, more popular idiom" (Marshall, 222). Though he qualifies his statement with the idea that this style is out of Bach's typical compositional character, his point emphasizes the idea that we cannot limit our expectations about a composer merely to stylistic categories of his most typical manner of composition; a composer of Bach's caliber is certainly capable of moving away from his own stylistic tendencies, and therefore an unusual or unexpected style is not enough to argue that a piece is not the work of J.S. Bach.

One stylistic feature of J.S. Bach's music that Bach scholars have linked to his biography is the technical demands of his compositions. Many have drawn connections quite appropriately between the difficulties of his music and his virtuosity as a keyboardist. Christoph Wolff articulates this in his essay "Decisive Career Steps" in *Essays on his Life and Music* as a necessary feature of a performer's understanding of Bach's compositional style:

"For an understanding of Bach's life and work it must further be borne in mind that to an exceptional degree he knew how to combine the qualities of a creative and of a performing musician. His regular demands reveal maximum technical challenges, since he approached composition from the viewpoint of a virtuoso" (Wolff, 25).

To some degree this suggests that Bach composed his music for himself; as a highly skilled musician, Bach composed technically challenging music that he himself would enjoy perfecting and performing. In this way we get a kind of insight into Bach's motives that may lend some meaning to a performance of his music.

This virtuosity that Bach uses as an influence in his composition also seems to pose some stylistic problems, particularly in his compositions that are not written for keyboard. In the *Grove*

Dictionary biography on *Oxford Music Online*, Christoph Wolff cites “Scheibe’s famous criticism: ‘since he judges according to his own fingers, his pieces are extremely difficult to play; for he demands that singers and instrumentalists should be able to do with their throats and instruments whatever he can play at the keyboard. But this is impossible’ ” (Wolff, 34). Because Bach played primarily the keyboard, his expectations for instrumentalists seem at times to be unrealistic. It is perhaps for this reason that instrumentalists need to determine for themselves the pedagogical traditions for articulation when performing Bach and other Baroque works. Additionally, instrumentalists often struggle to find a place to breathe in Bach’s music, because phrasing at the keyboard is not limited by the performer’s lung capacity.

Yet there are capabilities instrumentalists possess that do not transfer to keyboard performances. Because an organ cannot provide dynamic contrast while holding a note, and relies only on changing the way each new note is played, the artistic potential of held notes and the swelling of a note while it is being held is often not specified in Bach’s compositions. Such stylistic additions to the music are not written in the original scores, but have been adopted by performers, just as ornamentations and varied articulations are embellishments accepted by performance practice through the years.

Regardless of whether we conclude that the *Flute Sonata in E-Flat Major, BWV 1031* was composed by J.S. Bach or his son C.P.E. Bach, there is much that can be learned about J.S. Bach’s varied compositional style, simply by looking at his attention to the galant style later in his career. Scholars look at this lighter, more popular style as a later shift from his more typical style. But as another dimension of his body of composed works, it is a part of his career that has been shaped by the work that came before. In his essay “Decisive Career Steps” in *Bach: Essays*

on his *Life and Music*, Christoph Wolff points out this common assumption about Bach's more reflective composing style:

His thoughts constantly revolved around refuge and the canon in particular. In so doing he in no way closed his mind to contemporary currents in music. Indeed, with types of movement influenced by folk music as well as the galant and expressive ideals of style, in "Peasant Cantata", "Goldberg Variations, or "Musical Offering" he provided the best examples that he could definitely keep up with the young generation" (Wolff, 31).

It is the canons, the complex blending of chorale-style voices, and the long phrases of interlocking rhythms that we typically associate with Bach's compositions, and bring to our performance of his music. But when we look at these occasions, where his music is influenced by the more popular musical trends of his time, the variety in his style adds a new dimension to our performance assumptions.

With Bach's compositional influences and his stylistic variety in mind, the question for the performer becomes how to incorporate this knowledge into a performance that both brings the music to life and respects the performance practice of the Baroque time period. This means developing an informed sense of the articulations, ornamentations, and other stylistic gestures that were typical of the time period, and then determining which will be most suitable to the music as well as to the performer's own tastes. The first issue facing the performer is the edition of the music she will perform; many music publishers have added articulations, embellishments, and dynamics to Bach's music that was not a part of the original score, incorporating another outside interpretation, that of the editor, to the performance. Thomas Nyfenger discusses the performance of the music of Bach's time period in the chapter "Go for Baroque" in his book *Music and the Flute*. He points out that historically, these decisions were left to the performer: "Much of the notation of the Baroque era was skeletal or minimal. Performers, through a lifetime of listening and experience...were expected (and indeed would have felt unfulfilled in any other

context) to embellish and improvise” (Nyfenger, 106). This idea suggests that there was much freedom in the hands of the performer to add stylistic embellishments and articulations to their rendition of the piece. It is a foreign idea to performers of classical music today, who look at the complex directions of musical notations as binding, and seek accuracy without much tangible creativity in learning the notes on the page. Improvisation, the typical performer assumes, is reserved for the much different musical genre of jazz.

Yet this freedom exists within the boundaries of the accepted forms of the time. Performers acknowledge that there was an accepted style of embellishments and articulations in the Baroque era, and this style limits a musician’s freedom in performance of Baroque music and makes the freedom a structured one. But without possession of any recorded evidence of what performers were physically doing at the time, and how their stylistic interpretations sounded in their renditions of Bach and other composers, we are limited to written accounts of stylistic performance practice. Nyfenger points out that Telemann has provided invaluable examples of the way a performer adds stylistic embellishments in the notes on the page, providing ornamented versions of Bach’s unadorned notes. Nyfenger turns this collection of examples into a charge for those seeking to represent performance style of the time period. “We must play these sketchy melodies, paying close attention to harmonic and rhythmic goings-on, then move to the ornamented version, analyzing and even labeling each embellishment and thus compiling a set of possibilities and parameters to be applied later to unadorned movements” (Nyfenger, 106-107). It is thus the responsibility of the performer to be knowledgeable in the existing examples of the stylistic embellishments of the time period, to practice and study them in as much depth as possible; yet these examples, Nyfenger suggests, are no more than valuable possibilities to the performer, who in the end makes her own stylistic decisions in performance.

Thomas Nyfenger's explanations of the freedoms of Baroque music led him to draw connections between the music of Bach's era and the much more modern musical genre of jazz. He brings up the idea first after pointing out the traditions of improvisation that existed for performers to move their playing beyond the notes on the page, remarking that this is something the much older music has in common with jazz (Nyfenger, 106). The idea comes up again when he discusses his own interpretations of Baroque music, and the ways his embellishments have been adopted and further transformed by other performers. Nyfenger follows this with the playful remark: "So what of the fellows with the powdered wigs and the funny instruments? Is there not a jazz or its equivalent in every age?" (107).

This is a much broader statement about the freedom of music in its current era; music as a medium that influences as well as it is influenced provides the notion that arguably every music, in its own time, had the freedom and the pliability of jazz because as a form of human, artistic expression it cannot remain static. Nyfenger goes on to say, "Squareness and stodginess are products of dusty minds as is historical blindness and blandness and undue reverence for any composer whose art had survived his presence" (107). It is time therefore, according to Nyfenger, which places a haze over the freedoms of the performer and adds the unnecessary pressure to perform an accurate rendition of the styles of the time in which the music was composed.

In performing Bach's *Flute Sonata in E-Flat Major*, I therefore find myself in the middle of this thriving argument about the importance of performance practice; by choosing an edition of the piece to play, or in choosing which embellishments I will add to an unadorned edition, I am inevitably taking a side in this argument. The presence of examples provided by musicians of the period allows me to be informed, and it is only through closely examining these examples

and playing them myself, then comparing them to the edition I have been working with, that I will be able to come to my own decision. While I feel that a performance of Baroque music should respect its composer and the time period in which the music is written, I cannot say that I will not make some stylistic decisions that are based on my own opinions of which embellishments give meaning to the music for me. Thus my voice as the performer comes through in a different way than it is able to in later more romantic works, such as those by Debussy, in which all stylistic instructions are found on the page and are better followed than disregarded.

CHAPTER VIII

A Discussion with Rodrigo Tarraza: Stylistic Decisions in Performance of Bach Based in Baroque Performance Practice

One of the most interesting challenges to the modern performer preparing a Baroque work such as Bach's *Flute Sonata in E-Flat Major, BWV 1031* is to overcome the significant time difference that exists between the performance practices typical when the music was written and today. In the middle of the 18th century, the Baroque transverse flute was a wooden instrument much different from the modern flute, and therefore both provided different benefits and posed different challenges to the performer of the time period. An understanding of this difference, as well as the differences in performance practice and style in the Baroque era of composition is very important to the making of performance decisions in our own renditions of Bach's music today.

In order to explore these ideas I sought a flute performer and teacher with expertise in the Baroque flute and performance style of Bach's time, but one who also performs on the modern flute; with knowledge in flutes of both periods, the performer can make associations between the two that will provide insights into the adaptation of Bach's music to the modern flute. I discussed these issues in a Skype interview with Rodrigo Tarraza, a Boston-based flutist whose performance and teaching career is focused on period instruments, but who has experiences adapting these techniques to the modern flute³.

Tarraza reviewed my questions before we spoke, and his first concern when we began our interview was with the authenticity of the composer. He immediately stated that the *Sonata in E-Flat Major, BWV 1031* was written not by Johann Sebastian Bach, but by Carl Phillip Emanuel Bach. "You can see, for example in the *E-major Sonata*, which is actually in a different

³ See 'Appendix C' for the fully transcribed interview with Rodrigo Tarraza.

style already, you can see that's J.S. for sure, you can just see in the richness in the melodies, and in the harmonies in particular, which is really distinct and it's not so rich in the *E-flat*" (Tarraza). His argument in favor of C.P.E. as the composer is not, as Robert L. Marshall claims, limited by a failure to believe that J.S. Bach was capable of writing in the galant style. Instead Tarraza cites another work composed by J.S. Bach, the *E Major Sonata*, which is written in the galant style and yet differs from the *E-Flat Sonata*. The former, Tarraza argues, is more harmonically complex than the latter; this seems to be a solid argument as its decision on authenticity is based in the stylistic tendencies of both composers.

Tarraza expands on his defense of the *E-Flat Sonata* as the work of C.P.E. by explaining how the compositional style is more characteristic of the younger composer. "It's just that what Carl Phillippe and other people were at that time were trying to do was to simplify the harmony, they were going towards the Classical Period already, so they were trying to make the music less complex, more expressive, more galant" (Tarraza). Not only does the style differ from J.S. Bach's style, it resembles C.P.E. Bach's works as well as the generation's compositional style, which is perhaps a response to the compositions of the previous generation; the simplified melodies are evidence of the next generation learning from masters such as J.S. Bach and then making their own changes. Perhaps this generational and stylistic difference, regardless of whether it was introduced by C.P.E. Bach or embraced by J.S. Bach, is an even more important distinction than the issue of whether J.S. or C.P.E. Bach composed it. The newer, lighter, and more popular style, which was increasing its following at the end of J.S. Bach's career, was the start of a trend in composition taken up by many historically renowned composers who came after Bach. In this way the early examples of the galant style serve as a kind of transition out of the Baroque period and into a new period and style of composition.

The argument for C.P.E. Bach as the composer of the *Sonata in E-Flat Major, BWV 1031* is well supported and convincing, but it is also a direct contradiction of scholars such as Marshall and others. As a performer it is arguably not necessary that I make a decision as to which side I support in this debate, but it is important to recognize what about our assumptions in performance change when the composer we have in mind changes. Much of the background knowledge gained about J.S. Bach's life, virtuosity as a keyboardist, and compositional style would no longer play as large a role if we were to assume the music to have been written by C.P.E. Bach. And yet they would still be important considerations; because C.P.E. Bach studied under J.S. Bach, those influences will still exist, even if they are diluted by an added degree of separation. Furthermore, many of the issues explored in researching the influences of the *Sonata in E-Flat Major, BWV 1031* pertained to the galant style of composition, and to adapting a performance from the Baroque flute, for which it was written, to the modern flute. Neither of these topics is changed if the composer is shifted from J.S. Bach to C.P.E. Bach. And because many of the arguments about which man wrote the music are derived from the written music itself, an authentic representation of that same music will not require the performer to take a side.

My discussion with Tarraza also focused heavily on the performer's stylistic decisions in terms of ornamentations, articulations, and other embellishments. Tarraza felt that, for the most part, Bach's music is written elaborately enough that the performer does not have to add much more ornamentation. When asked about what kinds of traditions exist for ornamentation in the Baroque period, Tarraza said: "One of the most important books about ornamentation in that period is written by Quantz, and it's called *On Playing the Flute*. He was a flutist himself, so that's one of the best books for finding out how people really thought about ornamentation, and about any performance practice of that time" (Tarraza). Tarraza goes on to say that one of the

challenges of determining performance practice in the Baroque era is that there is no way to know directly how performances sounded in that time; we are limited to the indirect written instructions given by the music's contemporary performers, such as Quantz.

The stylistic decisions surrounding articulation were perhaps the most stressed of the performance techniques Tarraza mentioned in our interview. He listed articulation as one of the performance decisions to be conscious of, saying: "I think articulation is very very important. It's got to be very precise. The thing about Baroque music is that articulation is very important, it has to be very sharp" (Tarraza). Because modern editions of Bach's music often employ editors who make articulation decisions on the music, I followed his comment up with a question about the standards for articulation, and mentioned that my edition had many articulations marked. Tarraza asked to see my edition, and stressed emphatically that my edition in no way followed Baroque standards of articulation. He explained that my version, in which most of the notes are tied, is a later and more Romantic way of playing that does not match the carefully articulated, separate notes of the Baroque period.

Tarraza emphasized the importance of the performer's decision in articulating music of the Baroque era. "You can work it out, you know if you read something like Quantz, he will tell you, and you will see like this opening phrase [sings it], you will not tie it together, you will articulate it all, except for the quick phrases, because those will not sound very good" (Tarraza). The reason for this emphasis on separate, articulated notes, he explains, is that the Baroque flute is designed in such a way that makes articulation much easier than it is on the modern flute. Articulation, therefore, is the performer's decision; ties should be used sparingly and only in twos and threes, but where they are employed is relatively flexible. It is interesting that although Tarraza is very much against the following of another editor's stylistic decisions, he does not

argue that the dynamics or ornaments are necessarily wrong (except in the case of my edition, in which they use ties more liberally than is typical of the Baroque period). Rather he points out that those embellishments are just one possibility, and that it is up to the performer to make those decisions based upon her own tastes and the influences of other musicians. Thus research and aesthetic decisions are the responsibilities of the performer preparing a Bach piece such as this.

Performances that keep Baroque stylistic technique in mind, according to Tarraza, also utilize vibrato only as an ornament, on the Baroque flute perhaps using the “flattement”, a key that alters the pitch of the note physically and was helpful because breath vibrato is more difficult on the Baroque flute. They also use dynamic contrast from soft to louder to soft again on one note, rounding it and perhaps helping to create space between the notes, a stylistic decision typical of Baroque music. Tarraza described performers’ use of notes inégales, the idea of unequal notes as “stylistically very typical”. This is an interesting stylistic embellishment, as swung rhythms don’t seem to be common in modern performances, and are often believed to be an innovation of jazz musicians.

Yet Johann Joachim Quantz’s book *On Playing the Flute* mentions unequal notes explicitly. He describes the difference between principle, accented notes and less stressed passing notes, and states that the principle notes should be emphasized. Therefore, Quantz argues, in passages with quick notes in pieces of moderate tempo, the notes, “though they seem to have the same value, must be played unequally, so that the stressed notes of each figure, namely the first, third, fifth, and seventh are held slightly longer than the passing...although this lengthening must not be as long as if the notes were dotted” (Quantz, 123). Our lack of any auditory examples of the performances of the Baroque era is perhaps the reason that this performance technique has been lost through the years.

All of these performance techniques are employed so that the musician playing works of the Baroque era today, on modern instruments, will be able to provide as authentic a representation of Bach's original intentions in composing the music. Yet Tarraza stresses that in terms of tone, it should not be the goal of performer who plays a modern flute to achieve the sound of the Baroque flute. The modern flute, he says "should be played like the modern flute, you shouldn't try to play like the Baroque flute because it sounds wimpy, it sounds bad if you try to do it" (Tarraza). In this way, just as a performer respects the desires of the composer, but certainly benefits from putting a bit of herself into her performance, a performance on the modern flute, though respecting many of the stylistic articulations and embellishments, still must embrace its sound as a modern flute and bring its own instrumental identity into the performance.

This research and discussion of Baroque performance practice has provided perhaps the most tangible stylistic influence on my own performance; I am intrigued by the idea of freedom in ornamentation and embellishments in Baroque music, and plan to investigate the performance practices of the time before I make my decision about the edition of the *Flute Sonata in E-Flat Major, BWV 1031* that I will perform from in my recital, as well as which embellishments I will choose to adopt and which I will ignore. Although freedom in stylistic decisions was a theme in the Baroque era, I do believe it is important to avoid editions that represent a different, more Romantic style than was performed in Bach's time.

CHAPTER IX

Reflection: Stylistic Decision-Making Regarding Approaches to Articulation, the Galant Style, and Improvisational Embellishments

A thorough preparation of Bach's *Flute Sonata in E-Flat Major, BWV 1031* requires the performer to investigate the issues of authenticity in terms of the composer, to become familiar both with the Baroque performance techniques of the time and the galant style existing within that era, and to explore the different possibilities for a transfer of the performance from the Baroque to the modern flute. But once the performer has investigated all these different performance possibilities, how does this affect her own performance of the piece? I would argue that for each performer the effects will be different, because each will be drawn to varying elements of each of these performance practices, and thus will make different decisions. In my own performance, I believe that the issue of the composer, as I have argued in the last chapter, will not influence my performance in any tangible way. What will play a role in the performance decisions I make will be the issues regarding performing with an articulation that represents the Baroque era, the overall feel of the galant style as an offshoot of the overarching Baroque style, and the degree to which I add my own embellishments to my performance.

In order to address the issues of articulation, particularly in light of my study of Thomas Nyfenger's advice on performance of Baroque music and my discussion with Rodrigo Tarraza, I have decided to move away from the edition I was originally playing from for my recital, and to determine my own articulations. This decision requires me to seek out more influences, and in doing so I explored Johann Quantz's articulation advice in his book *On Playing the Flute*. Quantz details many different kinds of articulation typically executed by the Baroque flutist in his sixth chapter: "Of the Use of the Tongue in Blowing Upon the Flute". The various forms of articulation: mainly ti, di, tiri, and did'll, are used based upon the length of each note and its

position within the phrase, and seems to be a bit more complicated than the tonguing normally utilized by the modern flute (Quantz, 71-86). This is consistent with Rodrigo Tarraza's statement that articulation was more prominent on the Baroque flute because tonguing was an easier technique; something more important to the flute of that period would clearly have more varied forms of technical execution. And although in this chapter Quantz refers purely to following written articulations, with no mention of determining whether or not a slur should be used, the explicit details regarding the different types of articulation suggests that slurs were used sparingly in Baroque performance technique.

The idea of the performer determining articulations for himself is not directly mentioned or elaborated on in *On Playing the Flute*, but in the eleventh chapter, "Of Good Execution in General in Singing and Playing", Quantz talks about the importance of articulation in respect to phrasing. Quantz writes: "Musical ideas that belong together must not be separated; on the other hand, you must separate those ideas in which one musical thought ends and a new idea begins, even if there is no rest or caesura" (Quantz, 122). This suggests an interaction with the music that moves the performance beyond the notes on the page, and leaves phrasing decisions to the performer that allow and even require her to add pauses that are not written in the music.

Intervals between notes in a phrase and the character of the phrases themselves also play a large role in determining articulations, according to Quantz. He argues that: "sustained and flattering notes must be slurred to one another, but gay and leaping notes must be detached and separated from one another" (Quantz, 123). This idea is very fitting with the kind of sound we have in mind in Baroque music, of very rounded notes that are separated by small, barely perceptible spaces; and yet in more lyrical sections of Baroque music, like later music, we do expect the music to be more legato and pairs of slurred notes make sense in this context.

Written explanations of performance technique such as these chapters by Quantz are the closest we can get to understanding what instrumentalists in the Baroque period were doing in their performances. The only other influences possible to explore, in making my own performance decisions about articulation, are various recordings of Bach's *Flute Sonata in E-Flat Major, BWV 1031*. I sought the greatest variety by comparing the performances that utilized all Baroque instruments with ones that perform on the modern flute and piano, as well as performances that combine elements of the two.

The performance played entirely on period instruments was from the album *J.S. Bach: 6 Flute Sonatas*, and the performance of the *E-Flat Sonata* was by John Solum on Baroque flute and Igor Kipnis on harpsichord. In terms of articulation, the Baroque flute followed the patterns explained by Rodrigo Tarraza, tonguing all but the grace notes and added ornaments. Yet the manner of articulation was different in each movement. Although almost all notes were articulated, they were executed with an extremely legato tongue in the "Siciliana" movement; in the "Allegro Moderato" and the final "Allegro", runs where all notes are articulated contain some notes that are executed with a sharper tongue than others, and some notes that are leaned upon more heavily. This is a reflection of the advice of Quantz about various forms of tonguing, and suggests that this performer is executing Baroque articulations on a Baroque flute as a stylistic technique; although it is beneficial to hear an example of this, it is something that I cannot employ in my own performance because my use of the modern flute.

To get a sense of performance practice when all modern instruments are used, I referred to the album *Chamber Music for the Flute*, listening to a recording performed by Jean Claude Jerard on modern flute, and Daniel Blumenthal on piano. The sharp difference between the sounds of the instruments was immediately evident, but I found that for the most part Jerard

articulated his notes crisply and slurred mostly in pairs of two's and threes in the “Allegro Moderato” movement. When the phrases involved sixteenth-note runs, Jerard often seemed to articulate all the notes with a very soft tongue, sounding them each individually, but allowing them to run closely together in a smoothly moving phrase. This was also the case in the “Siciliana”, which he played in a very legato style; this phrase-conscious approach to articulation seems to gesture very nicely towards the different styles of tonguing described by Quantz and employed by John Solum, the Baroque flute player described above. Yet in the final “Allegro” movement, Jean Claude Jerard makes the articulation decision to slur the long runs of sixteenth notes that move downwards at various points of the movement. This is something you would not find, as far as we can tell, in a performance on a Baroque flute, and is either an example of the stylistic adaptations made with a modern flute, or simply the decision of the performer.

The articulation decisions made by Jean-Pierre Rampal in the album *Bach: The Complete Flute Sonatas* seems to bridge the gap between these stylistic decisions. Rampal performs on a modern flute, but is accompanied by Robert Veyron-Lacro on the harpsichord. This blending of the period instrument with the modern allows for a compromise between a very Baroque sound and a more modern one. Rampal also articulates a majority of his phrases, and when he employs slurs he seems to stay closer to the Baroque style of avoiding slurs over more than two or three notes. In the “Siciliana” section his articulation is so legato it is almost imperceptible, but he tongues each individual note. Where Jerard slurred long sixteenth note runs in the “Allegro” movement, Rampal pairs them up in twos, and the eighth notes he tongues are legato, giving the effect that they are all running together while still retaining some space.

With all of these written and recorded examples in mind, I plan to choose the way in which I will articulate my own performance of Bach's *Flute Sonata in E-Flat Major, BWV 1031*

by drawing elements from each version. Although the sound, simply by virtue of instrumentation, will be most like the recording that uses both the modern flute and the modern piano, much of my articulations and pairings of notes will be influenced by the third recording, by Rampal. Without a Baroque flute to make the execution of more frequent tonguing smooth, more slurs will be necessary between notes than in John Solum's performance on Baroque instruments. Although I will draw ideas from phrases in all three recordings, I will not be copying any specific version's articulation into my own, unadorned music. I found value in both Thomas Nyfenger's written advice and Rodrigo Tarraza's spoken suggestion that I listen to the examples and decide for myself. The final articulations I perform in my recital are the ones I have worked out in the practice room, away from these recordings but keeping their general trends in mind. Thus I am able to add my own interpretation into the stylistic discussion about the approaches to articulation in Baroque music.

The next stylistic influence to keep in mind, based on my research and my discussion with Rodrigo Tarraza, is the importance of the galant style of the *Flute Sonata in E-Flat Major, BWV 1031*. It differs from the typical Baroque piece in its lighter, less complex nature, and was typical of a new trend of composition found in the later part of J.S. Bach's career. To some degree the galant style is already written into the notes, particularly because we can identify the style by taking a close look at the notes on the page, their livelier melodies, and their simplified harmonies. In this way the composer has done the work for us. Yet once this stylistic identity has been recognized, the performer may communicate the idea more clearly to the audience in her own decisions in terms of embellishment and articulation.

With less harmonic complication thickening the sound of the galant-style piece, a performer can work to affect a lighter, freer feeling; this is an example of an expressive idea that

can be found in the music and, once found, can be brought out all the more by the performer. Additionally, Quantz's directions regarding articulations and their relation to the intervals between the notes of the melodic line is particularly important in the galant style. The *Flute Sonata in E-Flat, BWV 1031*, for example, is full of examples of leaping melodies and lines with plenty of movement up and down the scale. These features of the music, when brought out by its expressive playing through articulation and carefully placed emphasis, complete the work that the composer started of making the music embody a distinctly galant feel. This is a particularly freeing experience for the performer of Bach's earlier works who, like Scheibe (whose criticism was discussed in the first chapter addressing Bach), feel that his compositions are a challenge to instrumentalists because their long and dense lines are more suited to keyboard solos. In the galant style the melodies are shortened and simplified, giving the instrumental performer space to breathe and notes on which to pause. This more technical freedom assists the musician in their expression of the freedom typical of the galant style.

My performance of the *Flute Sonata in E-Flat Major, BWV 1031* will be influenced by these discussions and written accounts in the other ways in which I choose to embellish and ornament the piece. These decisions, like the ones made regarding articulation, are ones that I will come to through my own work with the music and my impressions of the ideas I hope to express; but written and recorded examples will serve a large role here as influences. The most noticeable stylistic embellishment will be the ornamentations I include in my performance: their frequency, location, and complexity. In his chapter "Of Good Execution in General in Singing and Playing" in *On Playing the Flute*, Quantz warns the performer eager to impress: "Some persons believe they will appear learned if they crown an Adagio with many graces...they are ignorant that there is more art in saying much with little, than little with much" (Quantz, 120).

This is an interesting warning that establishes the existence of a limit on the amount of ornamentation that may be tastefully applied to Baroque music; yet without examples we are left to decide for ourselves what Quantz considers “many graces”.

In listening to recordings of performances, we can hear how other artists have interpreted the idea of Baroque ornamentation. The performance from the album *J.S. Bach: 6 Flute Sonatas*, in which John Solum performs on Baroque flute, is by far the most ornamented performance of the three I have compared. He adds ornaments that are neither heard in many other recordings nor written in embellished versions to the entire piece, but particularly to the first two movements. The “Siciliana” movement in particular contains many added ornaments, and one wonders if this approaches Quantz’s warning about crowding slower movements with many ornaments. Yet it is just as possible that ornaments were even more liberally applied in the Baroque era, and we have taken Quantz’s instructions too seriously and stripped the music of some of its embellishing potential. The Rampal and Jerard performances of the piece are notably less ornamented, but choose to add ornaments in different places; I found in each case moments where an ornament I was expecting was not played, and other moments where I’d never considered an ornament the addition of a turn or grace note.

One note made by Rodrigo Tarraza in my conversation with him was that the grace note added in measure eleven of the “Allegro Moderato”, for example, to an eighth and then two sixteenths, should not in fact be played as four even sixteenths, as performance practice always suggests, but should be executed with the grace note shorter. This comment, made by a Baroque flutist, was reinforced in the John Solum’s performance on the Baroque flute. Both Rampal and Jerard, however, played the grace as an even sixteenth with the other three. This debate separates the flutes from the two periods stylistically and raises the question of whether the performer on

the modern flute, if she sees the Baroque flutists' ornamentation as more authentic, can choose to embellish her performance in the manner of the period instruments.

While adopting the ornaments of the Baroque flute is possible, the stylistic feature of the Baroque flute that cannot be mirrored by the modern flute is most clearly the difference in the sound. It is immediately recognizable when you move from a recording on a modern flute to one on a Baroque instrument. The sound on the Baroque flute is not as sharp or projecting as the modern flute, but it has a sort of rounded, wooden sound to it that makes it seem fuller, even if the sound is less dense. Rodrigo Tarraza, in our conversation in the last chapter, asserted that the modern flute should not try to mimic the sound of the Baroque flute, as it will result in a weak sound. After listening to the two performances and comparing their sound, Tarraza's point is one well taken; the difference in the sound is not the execution, but the physical material of the flute's composition, and a silver flute carries the best sound when it is played in a manner that brings out its clearer, brighter sound.

A final embellishment that the recordings seemed to embrace was the addition of tempo changes. Ritardandos and rubatos throughout the piece add contrast to the repeated phrases and shifting moods of the music that as a performer, I had thought were limited only to shifts in dynamics. The entire piece, but particularly the second and third movements, seems to be characterized by exact repetitions of a phrase played immediately after its original expression. In listening to all three recordings I was expecting to see this repetition accented by a decrescendo or a sudden crescendo, and was surprised when the dynamic contrast seemed more understated. Yet all three recordings used this shift in tempo: Rampal the most dramatically with sudden pauses, and Jerard more subtly with only slight ritardandos. This use of tempo changes is a very effective expressive element for Baroque performance.

All of these stylistic decisions, made by assessing examples of performance practice on period and modern instruments and exploring the written performance advice of Bach's contemporaries, bring us back to the question of what exactly the "program" is of Bach's *Flute Sonata in E-Flat Major, BWV 1031*. This question is one that could not have been addressed before looking at these issues of stylistic approach; a careful analysis of the emotion implied in the notes aids our decision-making in terms of embellishments and articulations. One possible approach towards assigning a program to this Bach Sonata is to apply a named style that carries emotional implications to each of its movements. The first, which contains rapid sixteenth note runs as well as more separately moving eighth note lines, seems to be almost a springtime dance, or a naïve musical love song. Our performance is therefore kept light and space between the notes is emphasized, and the tempo is lively but not rapid. The second, slower movement seems a kind of lyrical ballad; a song that is solemn without a heavily mournful nature. This idea is drawn from the notes, but the performer can emphasize this emotion by smoothing out the legato iterations of each note and moving with a gentle care from note to note. The final movement begins and ends rapidly, and has the most energy in its phrases of the three movements. It is reminiscent of a gigue, without the traditional stylistic implications; thus a performance of the third movement may be swift and smooth, but comfortable in its rapidity, so that the listener does not get the sense that the notes are tripping over one another. Though applying these ideas of various types of dances does not actually turn Bach's *Flute Sonata in E-Flat Major, BWV 1031* into program music, doing so may serve as a step in that direction, giving the performer an extra-musical idea associated with the movement with which to frame her performance.

In making my stylistic decisions about the ways to articulate and embellish Bach's *Flute Sonata in E-Flat Major, BWV. 1031*, the research, discussions, and examples I have explored

have helped to make my stylistic decisions informed. What shapes an individual performance, though, is the performer's temperament. The ways in which I have responded to different examples or arguments, agreeing with some and disliking the sounds of others, and occasionally finding myself pleasantly surprised by an unexpectedly convincing elaboration on the melody, directly affects the decisions I will make in my own performance. In this way I see the importance in Tarraza's suggestion that I work from an unadorned edition of the music. Some of these performance decisions will seem clear enough that I will know exactly where I will place an ornament, or increase the dynamics, and those I will mark into my music. But others will be left to the spontaneity of the performance, and the decisions made on the stage that we have discussed in relation to a performance of Debussy will shape the final moments of expression in the piece; and just like Benner-Savage comments in regards to a performance of Debussy, all of these discussions and discoveries will be present in these last-minute decisions, even if they are not consciously recognized.

CONCLUSION

The program I selected for my senior thesis recital has given me the opportunity to explore the nature of performance, not just in light of the various extra-musical narratives, images, and ideas that the music can suggest, but also in the context of the relationship between the performer, the composer, and the idea that the two are mutually trying to express with the music. As I move from piece to piece in my recital, the changing contexts of the composer, the style of the music, and any programmatic influences on the music change my performance techniques as well as my own frame of mind. Most importantly, this thesis has served as an experiment in performance practice, and has provided me with the means to try out many different methods of preparation of the music, observing the effects each method has over the music itself and the physicality of my own playing. The most valuable discovery that has resulted from this experimentation has been that performance is a constantly changing art form; the performer, as she learns more about the music and absorbs new mental images or programmatic context to the music, will always be making changes to the way she performs. Sometimes these changes will be drastic and sometimes they will be so subtle she may not even notice them taking place, but these changes are the ones that make musical performance such a fascinating art form, and one so worthy of study.

This study began with a close look at Claude Debussy's *Prelude to "The Afternoon of a Faun"*, a beneficial place to start because of the great deal of accessible programmatic material associated with the piece. A close analysis of Stéphane Mallarmé's poem, "The Afternoon of a Faun" was important to the preparation of Debussy's music because it provides the performer with the knowledge of precisely what the composer was working with when creating the

Prelude. It was tempting, at the start of my study, to try to find specific points of comparison between the poem and the music, and to point out evidence of the narrative progression of the poem in Debussy's music. But further study of the intention of both artists to elude such direct references to their subject matter led me to a greater understanding of their relationship to one another, and also of the music and the manner in which its emotional impact comes across so effectively.

My discussion with Lynnette Benner-Savage about the ways in which contextual information can translate into a physical performance enhanced my conception of the music by introducing this idea of clearing the mind in performance. Although rigorous preparation seems to be an obvious part of performance, the idea of pushing that preparation below a conscious level, so that the mind is free to make instinctual decisions in the moment of performance, seems an interesting strategy. It is also one very fitting to the Debussy *Prelude to "The Afternoon of a Faun"*; much of my study has involved learning about the ways in which both Mallarmé and Debussy obscure the point of their art and avoid naming that which they describe. Similarly, a clearing of the mind serves as a performer's way of obscuring the thoughts. This is particularly important to the opening phrase, which has been described as rhythmically complex to create the effect of spontaneous execution. It is necessary in performance of that line to clear the mind, in order to obscure the sense of beat and timing and create the sense that the opening line hangs for an indeterminate amount of time on that first note, but then falls on a whim, at just the right moment, through the rest of the phrase.

Preparation of the *Prelude to "The Afternoon of a Faun"* in my recital was chiefly a challenge of coordination, as I performed an arrangement that was a trio for flute, clarinet, and piano. In our rehearsals we focused on issues of pitch, tempo, and the lineup of the three parts

within their various entrances and exits. With so much to think about it seemed difficult to follow Benner-Savage's advice and clear my mind; this was particularly the case in the tricky middle section, where our three parts overlap duple and triple rhythms. Although it was necessary to listen carefully to the other parts, I found that when I began to over-think this section I was anticipating the pianist's downbeat too much, and had a tendency to rush. In the rehearsals where I managed to clear my mind, I found myself relaxed enough to feel the beat of the piano more effectively, and our mixed meter phrasing held together; this was particularly helpful in my recital, and I found myself remembering this at certain parts of the performance, and it loosened up my playing.

There is some similarity between Debussy's approach to poetry in *Prelude to "The Afternoon of a Faun"* and Charles Griffes' in his *Poem for Flute and Orchestra*. Griffes was an American composer known to use poetry, and often a specific poem, as an influence in each of his compositional works, but it seems that there is no specific poetry that influenced his flute solo, *Poem for Flute and Orchestra*. Yet Griffes' music in this piece is similar to Debussy's in the manner of approach and the progression of the music. The music certainly moves through rising and falling emotions throughout the piece, culminating in a rapid and frantically chromatic section that builds and builds until it suddenly reaches its peak and then falls back down to the very calm opening theme, which is all the more peaceful to the listener after such a dramatic buildup of emotions. The recapitulation eases the tension of the frenzy that came before it, but the final line of the music, much like a final line in a poem, leaves a feeling of very subtle discomfort, concluding peacefully, but with the presence of the anguish that came before lingering in the final notes. Griffes' *Poem for Flute and Orchestra* achieves the same kind of elusiveness as Debussy's *Prelude to "The Afternoon of a Faun"*, not necessarily in a

compositional style so much as in its gesture towards poetry as an art form in general, and the expression of very specific emotions in order to suggest the power of emotion of poetry as a whole. The emotion of the piece is so effectively written into the music that during my recital, and occasionally while rehearsing the piece, at the most climactic moments of energy of the piece I found myself filled with a frantic emotion, brought on not out of concern for whether I would hit the notes, but as a reaction to the manic anguish of the lines I was performing.

It was interesting to move next to Olivier Messiaen's *Le Merle Noir* in my study, because the idea of representing birdsong in a work for a flute is such a specific extra-musical influence for the music to follow. This is not so much the most explicit end of the spectrum of programmatic works, so much as it is an offshoot of the concept, using the sound of a flute to mirror the sound of a bird. Yet the very specific nature of blackbird song as a context for the music provided me with a stricter set of performance preparations than I found in studying Debussy's *Prelude to "The Afternoon of a Faun"*. Instead of expressing an idea or an emotion, I was mimicking a sound, and performing a series of phrases constructed from the composer's fieldwork transcribing birdsong. Learning about the manner of Messiaen's transcription of the blackbird's song, and the way in which he listened to the birds in the woods armed with nothing more than a pencil and manuscript paper, provided a sense that there was a layer of interpretation to the birdsong, as there is no way to know what blackbirds he heard or to hear the exact birdsongs he transcribed. In addition, learning about the alterations Messiaen made to the music in order to suit the melodies to the standards of notation and the intervallic limitations of the flute added another layer of interpretation to the music. Thus, as I come to the music in performance, I know that *Le Merle Noir* need not be a precise, scientific recreation of birdsong, but music

inspired by birdsong and meant to give a very strong impression of the music of the blackbird, within the confines of musical notation and the physical capabilities of the flute.

Continuing this discussion with Professor Bill Matthews added a new dimension to my perspective of approach towards performance of the piece. Our conversation about the relationship between the rapid cadenzas and the lyrical sections provided me with a new way to think about birdsong, the way a bird's mind may work, and a manner of reconciling those slower sections with the rapid, staccato nature of the music of a bird. Our conversation about the religious aspects of Messiaen's compositional style, as well as the importance of his wife's role in premiering his works, added context to my sense of *Le Merle Noir* and allowed me to see the work as a single part of his composing career. By listening to some of his other, orchestrated works I was able to see the complexity of his layering of birdsong on a greater scale, in *Reveil des Oiseaux*, as well as the passion of his musical line, inspired by his religious beliefs, in works such as *Quartet for the End of Time*. The latter of these two compositions certainly shed light on Matthews' suggestion that I "be the prayer" that exists in the lyrical aspects of *Le Merle Noir*, just as he suggested I "be the bird" in the cadenzas and the final climactic moments of the final section.

With Messiaen's *Le Merle Noir* falling in the middle of the program of my recital, I found it an interesting process to shift my mind so drastically from the mindset of the other pieces in my recital to the mental images and associations of the blackbird. The low opening run of the piece in the piano part served as a perfect way for me to move into this mentality, and I found my mental images of the blackbird, and myself as the voice of the bird, to help me play the opening cadenza in the right emotional mind frame. The momentary struggle I experienced in the second flute cadenza at the middle of the piece, was a challenge in my recital; a sudden

confusion of technical notes pushed the image of the blackbird momentarily out of my mind, as I recovered from the error. Yet it was only through returning my frame of mind to myself as the blackbird that I resettled myself into a level of comfort with the music.

Completing the study with the least programmatic of the works on my program, J.S. Bach's *Flute Sonata in E-Flat Major, BWV 1031*, was fitting because it revealed the ways in which a piece that does not set out to represent any extra-musical ideas or images can still carry with it a kind of performance expectation in the identity the composer, or the time period and style in which it is written. The debate that I discovered over the authenticity of the work as one of J.S. Bach's, first between biographers such as Marshall, and later in my discussion with performer Rodrigo Tarraza, raised interesting questions about the importance of the composer to the music. This was particularly important to my study, because it called into question the very assumptions with which I started my study, that the composer bears weight in the style a performer employs, particularly in approaching Bach. But it was this very debate that helped me refine my definition of these performance expectations; I discovered that it was not so much the composer as it was the Baroque time period and the galant style in which the *Flute Sonata in E-Flat Major, BWV 1031* was composed that affected the performance.

The Baroque style is a difficult one to imitate with confidence because of our failure to know with any certainty what the music of performers in that era sounded like. I came across many sources describing improvisation in Baroque time periods, an idea that is not so common in our perceptions of the music of Bach today. What is particularly difficult about attempting to perform Bach in a manner that is loyal to the Baroque style of execution is that any written advice on articulation, embellishments, ornaments, and improvisation, is all relative. There is no way to know whether a warning to avoid over-embellishment means that added ornaments were

rare and tasteful, or if the warning was merely to guard against the eager performer who adds a turn to every note. I discovered, therefore, that period performers must make a set of judgment calls when recreating Baroque music with as much authenticity as possible, and that all performances of the music that take place today are typically informed interpretations.

The most direct change that my study of Baroque music made to my approach to performing J.S. Bach's *Flute Sonata in E-Flat Major, BWV 1031* was the change in edition of the music that I used. I found switching to an unadorned copy of the music and then adding in my own decisions of articulations and ornamentations to be an extremely valuable learning process and provided me with a chance to compare professional existing performance recordings with the written advice of musicians from the Baroque era, and to make my own final decisions in my performance. Although I did write these decisions into the music in the form of ties, crescendos, and trill markings for the sake of comfort in my performance, the fact that they are my own interpretations and decisions helps to sustain the concept of freeness and interpretation that seems to be characteristic of the performances of the Baroque era. With more time, there is a chance that I may have added more ornaments to my performance; a few of the ornaments I heard in the recording of the sonata on a Baroque flute seemed like tasteful additions, and in my own practice and recital, I found myself thinking that the notes where they had been executed suddenly sounded bald and unadorned. The addition of such extra ornamentations is something that can come with time, and further familiarity with the Baroque style of embellishment.

The identity of the composer can influence an approach to the music regardless of time period, as I learned in my preparation of Ernest Bloch's *Suite Modale*. In studying the transformation Bloch made as his career as a composer progressed, towards a sense of identification with and pride for his own Jewish heritage, I came to a greater sense of

understanding of the composer that I think shed some light on my own interpretation of his *Suite Modale*. Although he modeled the music after a French style, it is very different from either of the works of Debussy that are found in my program, and I will not endeavor to create the same feeling of tone and color in Bloch's music merely because they are written in the same style. This is largely because of the understanding of Bloch's compositional style and unique identity as a composer, but also something that comes through in the written notes; it is very clear that *Suite Modale* expresses different emotions than either *Syrinx* or *Prelude to "The Afternoon of a Faun"*. There is no way to say definitively that these different emotions are a part of his Jewish identity, because there is no evidence that he sought to represent Jewish themes in the *Suite Modale* as he did in his other works. Instead, this difference in Bloch's style seems to be a result of his personal identity. Thus it is not the style, entirely, that affects the performance style of a piece, but also the emotions expressed in the notes and the identity presented by the composer.

As all of these methods of preparation come together and take on the form of my final thesis recital, my approach of performance in each piece presents just one possibility of interpretation of the music, and will be a combination of the many different details, ideas, and emotions that I have come to associate with the piece as a whole. The moments before each piece begins are the moments in which all of these methods come together, and may manifest themselves in an image—the slick blackbird, turning its head in a sudden jerk—or a feeling of languid disorientation, as if I have just woken up in the middle of the day. There is no way to express in any quantifiable way the effects that these images and ideas have had on my actual performance, but I feel that my approach towards musical performance has been greatly influenced by my efforts to observe and isolate the physical changes these ideas have inspired in my own playing.

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APPENDIX A
Interview with Lynnette Benner-Savage

Interview removed due to copyright.

APPENDIX B

Interview with Professor William Matthews

A music professor at Bates College and a flautist with knowledge of Messiaen's life and compositions, as well as an interest in the musical representation of birdsong.

[We begin by listening to a recording of the first third of the piece]

KN: How reliant do you think a successful performance of *Le Merle Noir* is on familiarity with the blackbird's song?

WM: When you say *the* blackbird's song, you mean *a* blackbird, because the way some species do sing may be pretty much the same from one individual to another, sometimes, but others are *very* different. I don't know which blackbird it is, *Le Merle Noir*, I don't know if the French blackbird is different from blackbirds around here.

[Here Matthews suggested some ornithology websites, and we listened to the calls of a few different blackbirds. Most were very different from the notated calls in *Le Merle Noir*, but we found one that was more melodic than the others.]

WM: This [pointing to the music] is very tuneful. There's the repeating pitch, the G-sharp—that seems to be really an important pitch [Matthews continues pointing out repeating pitches]. He had perfect pitch, so the notes he was writing were correct, or as accurate as they can be, but by default because birds have advanced voice boxes, they have what's called a syrinx, and some birds have two of them, which makes them sing really tiny intervals within themselves. So by default when he notated those single lines he was always dropping notes. Something like this chromatic scale was probably a

glissando. So I think all you can do is play what he wrote accurately, since you're playing it with piano, and you're stuck with the notes because you don't know what bird it was, and we have no recordings.

KN: How about with rhythms? *Le Merle Noir* opens with a cadenza that has no regular meter or measure length. How do you approach this degree of freedom in performance? Do you establish your own tempo and spacing between the phrases at the start and then commit to it, or do you rely on a kind of improvisational freeness each time you begin the piece?

WM: I think it's between you and the pianist. His phrasing, in general, is very odd, it's not unusual for him to notate things without any time signature. Even if it shifts, you would call this a 2/4 bar, you would call that a 4/4 bar, but what do you call that? It's got 12 sixteenth notes. Is it 3/4? No, obviously not. So usually his rhythms are made by stringing together a series of durations. You may have read about how he's famous for what's called non-retrogradable durations. They're not jumping off the page here, but for example, here, he calls them non-retrogradable because they are exactly the same going forwards as they are going backwards, and what that means is that his rhythms are very static, that they don't ever sort of move in a direction. And if you listen to his organ music he's always using the same techniques all the time, for example with his *Quartet For the End of Time*. So the performer is always faced with the challenge to make something move forward that is written to *not* move forward, that's very satiric. Now with harmonic instruments he does this with dissonance, and he's extremely colorful about the intervals that he uses, which I think are derived from the notes. But his harmonies are sometimes triadic, but almost always chromatic notes. So it's the constant dissonance level that keeps the music moving forward.

[We listen to a recording of the end of the piece]

KN: Different performers break up the phrasing in the opening cadenza differently, and pause for different amounts of time between phrases. Is there a reason or method to the phrases and pauses do you think, and to what degree does that relate to your impression of the blackbird's music?

WM: I've actually listened to a lot of birdsong, so when you say 'a little bit different' I suppose it's things like the rhythm here. So this is a grace note that turns into a sixteenth note here; it's the same thing with tiny little differences and that is in fact how birds usually sing. Even when it seems like they're repeating themselves, there'll be some single note, if you're thinking about notes, that's different, or the rhythm is a little bit different, or there'll be a glissando where there wasn't one. So even when a bird is known for a particular song, that song will always be ever so slightly varied. It might have to do with the rhythms, [Matthews sings an example]. Every time will be just a little bit different. So this is very much taken from how birds perform, with the kind of ostinato that just changes a little bit every time.

KN: You can definitely see that notated in this end section, and it's played through very quickly, so that makes sense. But then with sections like the cadenzas, where the performer has more choice—

WM: Yes, you've been using that word 'cadenza', I was wondering about that.

KN: I'm calling this a cadenza, that's what I've heard it called when I was learning it as well, because it's just flute part alone, and also my teacher and I were working on this she would say thinks like, "Okay well when I was working on this with my teacher, I was told, 'here you pause, here you put these phrases together, go through this quickly, take time here.'" So how much do

you think, if you were working on this, how much would it be about phrasing, and how much would it be about what a blackbird would do? Because you were saying they have these pauses and they do it differently every time.

WM: Right, because you never know how long those pauses are going to be, so I think you need to be spontaneous about it. Birdsong is so high frequency and happens so quickly, I'm wondering what their brains are like. Are they able to hear all those little tiny details? I presume they are, they have little tiny ears. So they must be able to hear very high frequencies, higher than us, I would say. But I don't know that I've ever read any data about it. So I've often wondered about a bird's psychology. What is a bird's sense of time? I mean, their hearts beat very fast, and they seem very quick to us. The way they move, the way they sing, and they're just really very quick and very alert, and so I'm wondering if time to them seems quick. Or, if they're in a very sluggish time; if everything seems slow to them. So I've often wondered about what it would be like to be a bird. So you can play that fantasy, and spend some time watching a bird. Messiaen is on record as having talked about birds. What does he say about them?

KN: I mention a quote of his in my research chapter that sums it up really nicely. Griffiths quotes Messiaen as having said: "I do not believe one can find in any human music, however inspired, melodies and rhythms which have the sovereign liberty of birdsong" (Griffiths, 174).

WM: Right, that's an interesting way to put it: sovereign liberty.

KN: Yeah, and so I guess it's just interesting that by notating that he's very carefully writing out this kind of free birdsong.

WM: That's the irony, the notation is so explicit and it seems so exact.

KN: Yeah and so then it's the responsibility of the performer to make it sound free again. And then it's one of those questions of: are you taking your own liberties with it, or is it only by performing the exact notes that you can have the right performance?

WM: Well his notation, although it's so it's exact, there are no repetitions. Even if there's an ostinato it's always a little bit different. The notation is an attempt to put down on paper this melody, so there's an irony there. So I would say you need to go more with, [points to added breath marks] are these your breath marks or your teacher's breath marks?

KN: Those? Those are my teacher's breath marks.

WM: Yes, these are added. So that's an added pause, and I think you just have to do that. Because, as I said, if you listen to a bird, it doesn't even have to be a blackbird, I think there are a lot of chickadees around, they have a very discreet and easy to recognize song, and you could look at the way they behave. And I think that their general behavior is like the general pacing of song and time would be consistent, because that seems to be consistent across species. So then the question is, birds are fast. This [pointing to the first section, the "cadenza"] is clearly the birdsong; what is this [pointing to the slow, lyrical sections of the piece] though? Does this pitch series come from any of this? Do you find your fingers following a familiar path when you play this, that may come from up here?

KN: I haven't really found anything specific. But I feel like these have some sort of pattern within themselves. I think just even the randomness of when the notes switch, and how you have to count the beats of the rhythms in relation to themselves, has struck me as birdlike. When there's a pause, or a note will be suddenly only half-time, and later on one of them will be one-and-a-half time. I think this is tricky because the first section is quick and feels like birdsong, but

yet this section we're looking at is more lyrical. So I guess my question would be: is that just for the sake of the piece? Could he have written an entire piece that was just the quick bird transcription of the first section, and did he just add these sections for compositional reasons?

WM: I think you should listen to his other pieces that contain birdsong, so that you can make some generalizations about the way he handles birdsong. Because to my knowledge I think that this is typical, that he would present what he has done to transcribe the birdsong, and then he'd go to town with it. [Lists the notes being played] See if you can figure out what mode these notes are in, because he will often use an eight, or nine note scale, with half steps where you wouldn't expect them, usually. And then at any one moment the chord could be any one of those notes. But the harmony is always a subset of that, and I'm guessing that's what he does here. My question is, is this mode derived from what he's doing in the first section, can you find this scale up there? And from what I know, the answer would be yes. It's not jumping out at me, but it's the kind of thing where sometimes when you practice your fingers will recognize it and say, 'oh wait, I did that'.

KN: So how do you account for these two very different sections in *Le Merle Noir*, where the one is so quick and rhythmic but the phrasing is subject to the performer's discretion, and the other is lyrical but has to be timed carefully with the piano in order for it to fit together?

WM: If I were playing it I might think this [the first section] is the bird, and this [the second section] is what the bird thinks. This is what the bird sings, and this is how the bird hears it and what the bird thinks about it. So I would take that approach—I mean, he says tenderly, but you don't think of birds as tender, they're the opposite of tender. You know, they're not soft, they're never relaxed, they're not soothing, they're always on

edge. But this lyrical part is so smooth and consistent. So this first section might be the blackbird, and the second section might be his love for the blackbird.

KN: And what about the timbre of the flute in relation to the blackbird? *Le Merle Noir* is so explicitly representative of the call of the blackbird, so it's hard not to compare their tones. How do you relate the tone and color of the flute to the bird it's seeking to represent, and what kinds of physical changes do you make in your playing to the mouth, throat, diaphragm, etc. in order to bring about this similarity to the blackbird in the sound of your flute?

WM: The first section happens so quickly, it's not about tone—you don't have time to get a beautiful tone. I think it's more about the rhythm, to me, so yes I would say this should be very quick. Yes, I would think of myself as a blackbird. Which might mean you're out of control, you're not in your human mind, you are as I said existing on this other plane where time is happening very quickly and very jerkily.

KN: So then, if that's how you're thinking when you're playing, how does that effect what you do physically?

WM: Very short releases, very strong accents. He gives you phrasing, so I would accent the beginning. He doesn't say diminuendo, but a bird would probably diminuendo at the end of a phrase, so I would almost think of that note there as swallowed.

KN: That's actually the image that came to mind for me when I was working on it. I thought about the sound going back down into my throat for some reason, like I was swallowing it.

WM: Yep, I would go with that. You ask about changes in embouchure and that's how you'd do it, that's the goal. So I don't think this is about tone. I don't think this is necessarily about pitch, I think it's about rhythm and style: very perky. Birds sometimes, I mean, when he writes something like this, here, it looks like he's got a five-note phrase

where all the notes are of equal weight—birds don't do that, there are some notes that are swallowed, there's some notes that are barely heard, there are some notes that are surprisingly accented. So I would not go out of my way to be even, I would go out of my way to allow unevenness. A high pitch is going to be louder, its going to jump out at you—let it do that. Normally, if you were playing a smooth, melodic tune, human music, you would back off on a really high note, so it wouldn't scream. I would let it scream.

KN: So it's kind of what the flute would do naturally, then, without all the added things we do to smooth out the music?

WM: Yeah. I mean Messiaen wasn't a flute player; he was an organist. So when you play something like this on the organ you have no choice, it's got to be all even. You have some control over the rhythm, you can play really short, and that's true with piano music too. He was married to this French pianist, Yvonne Loriod, and they were married forever, and she was his primary interpreter. So if you listen to her play birdsong music on the piano, you have to imagine that that's what he wanted. Because they were such a team, and she premiered all of his music, always. But I think you could learn a lot from listening to her, even though it's not on the flute, from what she does with it, even just the way she breaks up phrasing.

KN: Okay, that makes sense for the quicker sections, but then what about the lyrical section? So if this first section you're thinking in terms of the bird and what it's doing, and then the next section is what the bird is thinking, I mean there's the obvious change in style, but is there anything else that you would think about or do when you were playing a part, if that's what you're representing in this section?

WM: Messiaen was also a really fervent Roman Catholic, but of a sort of odd, fantastical variety, he was very far into mystical experience. There are some mystical strains of Catholicism that get into some weird stuff. And so this also shows up in a lot of his music. He's got some titles like *The Beautiful Jesus and the Fourteen Tears* that will be some kind of hallucinated spiritual inspiration that he has, and a piece with a title like that (and that's not an untypical title) will have this kind of glowing and very fervent, I want to say almost hymn-like, but it's nothing like a hymn that we think of. And a passage like this [in *Le Merle*] would be all about religion. It would be about how he would feel about the bird as Jesus. He composed one later about St. Francis of Assisi, St. Francis of the Birds, who is this very famous hermit-saint who communed with birds. And that was a subject of Messiaen's for a time. So that entire opera was about a saint's spiritual understanding of bird as God's creature. So it's all mixed up, the belief and the religiosity, and the love of natural song. I think Messiaen would have said that this [the first part] is pure, unmediated song from god. No human corruption has intervened.

KN: So then would you call the second, lyrical part corruption, then?

WM: The second part would be how can humans seek to perfect themselves, with the most beautiful harmonies and melodies they can think of, and that's why the structural relationship between the two sections is important, because he's using the first section in the second, most likely.

KN: Okay, this makes sense. But then you're thinking of his religious views, and you're playing the notes, how do you get from that thought process to where you're playing, what would change about your playing *physically* when you do that?

WM: I myself haven't prayed in 40 years. But you should play this like a prayer, as a prayer. You're addressing what you're playing to some ineffable. And you're expressing something ineffable. So we're beyond words, we're transcending words, so I can't find words to explain it. But if you think of this as a sort of glowing expression of your tenderness and your profound gratitude for a miracle or whatever, that's what Messiaen's doing here.

KN: In teaching this piece, or any other music, are there other ideas and metaphors that you explain to a student that allow him or her to add certain stylistic elements to their performance? Do you use any metaphors to help a student change their tone, and what would be an example of that?

WM: I've used a lot of metaphors in teaching—play this like you're praying, play this like you're a bird. And bird time is not human time. I really don't understand bird time at all. Some species of birds do have really rigorous call and response methods. And sometimes you can get birds in a series who will sing in exactly the same order, although the time might be different. Birds do listen to each other, and the song is communication at probably a much higher level than we know. Some things bird studies have observed, like the chickadee, the chickadee does a couple of different songs, [Matthews gives birdsong impression]. And then the call is 'chick-a-dee-dee-dee', or something, and it turns out the number of 'dees' corresponds with the level of danger. So if there's a cat at the foot of the tree there would be more 'dee's than if it's a nice sunny day. So we have managed to decode some very simple correspondences, but I am convinced that the birds are communicating more than we think. It's not just sort of singing joyously, it's always for some purpose. So you sort of have to be a bird, and you have to be a prayer. I was

talking to Carol Dilley, about a dancer who graduated, and she was one of the greatest dancers we've had at Bates. And she said, 'the other students *do* the dance. Karen *is* the dance.' That's the difference. You can perform this piece or you can *be* this piece; you can perform the bird or you can be the bird. Which might mean spending some time with the birds.

KN: One last question then: from a listener's perspective, how important do you think knowledge of blackbird's song, or at least the relation of birdsong to the music, is in order for the audience to appreciate a performance of the piece?

WM: This is some French blackbird, and I've never heard this one—I don't recognize any of this as a call I know. And in fact, this is interesting, when he transcribes robins or any other birds that I *do* know, I also don't recognize the songs he transcribes. So the listener should just know that *Le Merle Noir* means blackbird.

KN: So then the listener should know that they're listening to music that represents birdcalls then, in general, in order to appreciate the music?

WM: That'll be clear. Nothing else has this kind of characteristic. These fluttering specks of melody that sometimes of repeat and sometimes alter themselves ever so slightly. So given the title and given the way it sounds, the listeners would get that much.

KN: Do you think that without the title the listener would know they were listening to birds, or would they not know what was going on?

WM: It's a flute, they'd think birds. They've heard *Peter and the Wolf*. It's funny, birdsong, we're so used to it, it's just there all the time, especially in the summers. We tune it out most of the time, but everyone is willing to jump on the associations.

APPENDIX C
Skype interview with Rodrigo Tarraza

Interview removed due to copyright.